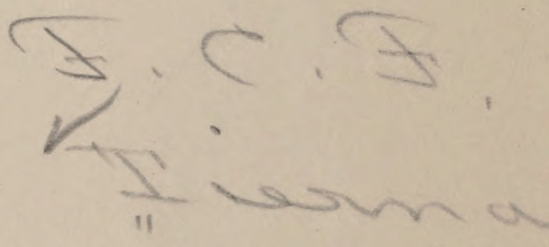
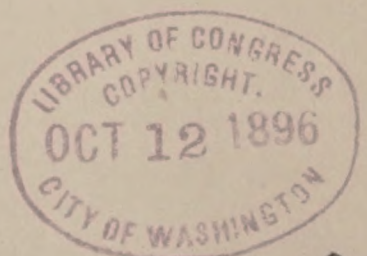
A WOMAN OF FORTUNE.

A NOVEL.

By CHRISTIAN REID,

AUTHOR OF "ARMINE," "PHILIP'S RESTITUTION," "THE CHILD OF MARY," "HEART OF STEEL," "THE LAND OF THE SUN," ETC., ETC.





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A WOMAN OF FORTUNE.

CHAPTER I.

"I WILL LEAVE IT BEHIND."

"AND you will certainly go, Cecil?"

It was a question rather than a statement, and as such Cecil Lorimer answered it.

"Yes," she said. "There is no reason why I should refuse to do so. It will be an agreeable change in my life—a bit of novelty and social adventure. I am rather stupid," she added, with a laugh. "Perhaps Paris will improve me."

Her sister, Mrs. Bernard, did not reply for a moment, but the expression of her face plainly indicated that she dissented from this opinion. Presently she spoke.

"I do not think any one else would call you stupid," she said. "And I do not believe Paris will improve you. According to my observation, it has, generally speaking, rather a contrary effect on people."

"You think it will demoralize me?" asked Miss Lorimer, with another laugh. "My dear, forgive me if I say that such ideas are a trifle narrow. There is no possible reason why Paris should demoralize anybody of good sense."

"Then few of those who go there have good sense,"

returned Mrs. Bernard ; "for you must acknowledge that it does demoralize a great many of them. Think of the women who virtually give up their homes and their husbands in order to live there !—think of the girls whose one idea becomes whether they have money or beauty enough to buy a husband with a title !"

"And do you think me likely to swell the ranks of the last ? I could not very well belong to the first."

"You ! Don't misunderstand me so dreadfully. I cannot express myself easily, but if you will be patient I will try to tell you what is on my mind—what has been on my mind ever since you received that letter."

"Very well," said Miss Lorimer—and she did not laugh again. "I will be patient, and you shall tell me once for all what is on your mind."

She certainly looked patient, but it was the patience of one bound by courtesy to undergo something tiresome and useless, as she leaned back in her chair, and absently stroked the head which a handsome Irish setter laid in her lap. Her large gray eyes—fine, thoughtful eyes, under dark lashes and darker brows—wandered away over the lawn that sloped in green beauty from the veranda where the two ladies sat. People frequently spoke of Cecil Lorimer's beauty as "classical," probably because the nobly shaped and poised head, the finely-cut features, and lily-like skin, recalled the somewhat vague idea of classical loveliness which floats through the popular imagination ; but for once the often misused term was not inappropriately applied, and this for a reason which lay deeper than the outlines of her nose or the bearing of her figure.

The modern mind is somewhat prone to overlook the fact that the ancient standard of beauty was an intellec-

tual one—that the old sculptors never chiselled a type of unintelligent loveliness. Behind the brows they moulded one feels that no weakness could dwell ; from the lips they sculptured it is impossible to imagine that words of folly could fall. And herein lay Cecil's chief claim to classical beauty—that hers was a beauty of almost severely intellectual character, only redeemed from coldness by a flash now and then of imperious brilliancy. It was evident at a glance that she was a person of strong character ; one, too, who had been early accustomed to habits of independence and command ; but there was a frank nobility in the face which promised well for that power of self-conquest which does not always accompany strength of will.

Her sister resembled her, as relations often resemble one another despite much difference of appearance—the noble outlines of one face being softened to graceful prettiness in the other. Whatever superiority for the former this difference implied, Mrs. Bernard would have been the first to acknowledge ; for her admiration of her younger sister knew no bounds. In her eyes there was no one so beautiful, no one so charming, no one so clever as Cecil ; and her confidence in that young lady's powers of judgment being of the highest order, it cost her no little effort on the present occasion to assume the character of mentor. A minute or two passed before she spoke again, and then it was with some hesitation.

"I am sure," she said, "you do not believe that I think *you* would find the same attractions in Paris—I might say in Europe—that the foolish people do of whom we spoke an instant ago ; but there are attractions there of a different order for people like yourself, and I am certain that if you go *in this way*, you will

either never return, or if you return you will never be contented to live here again."

"What a dark prophecy!" cried Cecil. "I must really ask you to explain it. Why, if I go *in this way*—in other words, if I accept the invitation of the Vicomtesse—will I be more likely to become sensible of such attractions than if I went abroad as most people do?"

"I think you might see for yourself where the difference is," observed Mrs. Bernard, who disapproved of having to explain her meaning. "People travel abroad to see churches and scenery and works of art; but you are going to visit a woman who has lived in Europe for thirty years, and who will introduce you into a society where your beauty and wealth must make an impression, and—and the end will be that we shall never see you again."

"But what is to become of me? You have not explained that."

"You will be married," said Mrs. Bernard, with melancholy decision. "I am sure of it. The Vicomtesse, who successfully bought a title for herself, will never rest until she has managed to marry you to some impecunious count or marquis."

"And that is your opinion of me?" said Cecil. "If it were worth being angry over—but it is not! I am only obliged to you for letting me know exactly how foolish you consider me."

"O Cecil, you *are* angry, and how unjust you are! You see, I was right in not wanting to explain myself. I knew you would misunderstand me. *I* think you foolish!—well, that, you know, is absurd. But I do think that you are very ambitious, and not at all sentimental; and how can I help fearing that you will be led to make

some great marriage, that will give you a brilliant place in the world, and separate you from us ?"

"What an absurd little creature you are, Nelly !" said Cecil. "How is one to reason over such nonsense ? But it does seem to me that if there was a woman in the world who might be considered apart from the possibilities of which you speak, I am that woman."

"I cannot see why. It is true that no man has ever pleased you yet, but that does not prove that some man may not do so eventually. And in Europe it is natural that men should be more refined, more attractive than with us. They certainly have much more to offer—when they have anything at all."

"I do not believe that any man in the world has anything to offer that I could care to accept," said Cecil, decidedly. "I cannot imagine myself being tempted by rank, and that is the only thing I do not possess."

"You like power—you must know that you do."

"I suppose I do, but it is power which I must win and exercise myself. All my dreams are like a man's : of doing some great work, of making myself of use—of importance, too, I fear—to a great many people. No doubt this is because my dear father filled me with such thoughts. How often he said, 'Wealth is a great responsibility because it is a great power ; never forget that, my dear' !"

"Of course it is," said Mrs. Bernard, as if assenting to a self-evident truth. "But it is a great temptation, also ; and when you find what it will purchase for you in Europe, I cannot but fear you will be tempted."

"Then the best way to relieve your mind will be to leave it behind me," said Cecil. "That is easily done.

Very few people here know the amount of my fortune, and I doubt whether the Vicomtesse ever heard of it at all. I am not altogether so obtuse as you imagine : the danger of her making matrimonial plans for me did occur to me, and I determined before you spoke to say nothing of my possessions, and simply enjoy a glimpse of foreign life like any modestly dowered American girl."

"But would that be quite—quite right?" asked Mrs. Bernard, hesitatingly.

"Why not? What I possess is my own affair ; whom else does it concern? If I choose to protect myself from possible annoyance by simple reticence, have I not a right to do so? When one asks a friend to visit one, the invitation is not supposed to depend upon the amount of his or her income. The Vicomtesse has invited *me*, not my fortune."

"But think what you will give up in the way of social importance and consequence! I know it is a wretched, mercenary world, but one must take it as it is ; and you are not accustomed to being insignificant."

"No," said Cecil, with a laugh. "It would certainly be strange to me to find myself so ; but if the degree of my significance depends upon outward things, and not upon myself, then it will be well to know it. So not another word! My mind is made up, and I hope yours is relieved. Are you resigned to my going now?"

"Y—es," said Mrs. Bernard, rather doubtfully. "But I wish we knew more of Madame de Vérac."

"Ah!" said Miss Lorimer, as she brought the setter's beautiful silken ears over to a point on his forehead. "She *is* a little of a mystery ; but if she were not so, one element of uncertainty and therefore of

pleasure would be taken out of my proposed visit. Did you ever see her? I think you said you did long ago."

"Yes, about twenty-five years ago. I was a very small child, of course, but I shall never forget how beautiful she was; the recollection of her is like a picture in my mind. She was then in mourning for her first husband. He had been minister to some court abroad, and I remember hearing mamma say, 'How Adela affects foreign manners!' She went back to Europe soon, and the next thing we heard she had married the Vicomte de Vérac."

"*Après?*"

"I scarcely know. There was a good deal of gossip; it was said that the marriage was unhappy. But who can tell what is the truth? They certainly never separated, and since his death she has lived in Paris, and had very little to do with her country people. I do not think she has written to any member of her family for years—until her letter to you."

"It is a little odd. Why should she write to me when mamma was only her cousin?"

"They were not like ordinary cousins. Both were orphans, and they were brought up together like sisters by their grandmother. I have often wondered—when I chanced to think of her—that she could let us slip out of her life so entirely."

"No doubt, as she candidly says, she forgot our existence until she saw that photograph of me which the Jerninghams—oh!"—her hands suddenly dropped from the dog's ears—"I did not remember the Jerninghams! They may have spoiled my plan by telling her of my fortune."

"I don't think there is the least probability of it.

They have been abroad for years. Mrs. Jerningham considers it cheaper and more amusing than living at home, and better for the education of the girls."

"True. It has been a long time since I saw them—I had quite forgotten how long. So there is no danger of my importance being betrayed, and I am to go, like a crowned head, *incog.!* What a nice joke it is, eh, Leo?" Hearing his name, Leo responded with a sharp bark. "There, there! I did not mean you to enter into the conversation. Go, bring my hat, and you shall have a walk. I don't ask you to join us, Nelly"—as the dog darted away—"because I know you prefer to wait for Jack."

"I certainly do not share your passion for exercise," said Mrs. Bernard. "How Leo will miss you when you are gone!"

"Dear old fellow! I am afraid he will," said Cecil, looking affectionately at the dog, who came back bringing her hat. "Jack must give him exercise. It is a shame for so fine a creature to be spoiled."

"Why not return him to his former master? He would give him exercise enough."

"Mr. Gilbert? I might do that. I do not suppose he would mind the trouble."

Mrs. Bernard laughed. "I do not think he is likely to mind any trouble for *you*," she said.

Something like an expression of impatient disdain came over Cecil's face.

"If you could know how disagreeable such remarks are to me, Nelly," she observed, "I do not think you would make them."

"I have said nothing that ought to be disagreeable to you," replied Mrs. Bernard, who felt that the eccen-

tricities of this young lady should occasionally be checked. "Most people desire to be liked."

"I do not share the taste of most people, then," said Miss Lorimer. "I decidedly object to being liked—in that manner."

Then she put on her hat, descended the steps, and walked away.

CHAPTER II.

"THE DESIRE OF THE MOTH FOR THE STAR."

MRS. BERNARD looked after the graceful figure with an expression half-amused, half-vexed.

"Such a girl!" she said aloud. "What is to become of her?"

Naturally the question remained unanswered, and for several minutes silence reigned undisturbed. The pretty country house, with its air of mingled simplicity and luxury, was quiet and empty behind her; while in front long sunbeams were streaming over turf vividly green with the freshness of spring, on flower-beds covered with bloom, and on a distant city that lay wrapped in golden mist. Not many minutes after Miss Lorimer had passed out of sight, however, this quiet was broken by a sound of approaching wheels, and a dog-cart containing two gentlemen came spinning rapidly round the drive. As it drew up before the veranda, Mrs. Bernard rose. Both gentlemen were on the ground in a moment, and one of them came toward her, hat in hand.

"How do you do, Mr. Gilbert?" she said, very graciously. "I am glad Jack has brought you out with him."

"Thank you, Mrs. Bernard. You are always so kind that Jack never has the least difficulty in inducing me to accept his invitations," replied Mr. Gilbert. "I sometimes think I should refuse occasionally, if only to in-

crease my value in his eyes ; but my strength of purpose is never equal to the effort."

"I hope it never will be," said Mrs. Bernard ; "for if it were we should not believe in it as strength of purpose at all, but as the deplorable fact that you had grown tired of us."

"As if such a thing were possible !" said Mr. Gilbert, with a most sincere accent.

He was not at all an ill-looking man as he stood uncovered, a gleam of sunshine falling over his ruddy locks—of that color which discriminating friends call auburn ; his intelligent face lighted up with pleasure, and his eyes—apparently small because deeply set, but clear and keen—passing by his hostess to scan the open windows behind her. Would not a beautiful, stately presence that he knew well appear at one of them ?

Mrs. Bernard saw the glance, and understood its meaning at once.

"It is a pity," she observed, "that you did not arrive a few minutes earlier. Cecil has just gone to walk alone. If you had been here she might have had an escort."

"If you will tell me which way she went, I will take great pleasure in following her," said Mr. Gilbert, quickly.

"Oh, don't go rushing away and overheating yourself !" said Jack Bernard, coming up. "Cecil will be back presently."

"So shall I," said Gilbert. "Thanks, Mrs. Bernard," as she indicated the direction. "I am a famous walker, you know."

"I should think so," said Bernard, regarding the long strides with which he departed. "But what was the good of sending the poor fellow off like that ?"

"It pleases him," said Mrs. Bernard, with a laugh; "it will do Cecil no harm, and it gives me an opportunity to say a few words to you. Come!" (she put her hand into his arm) "let us walk around the veranda while we talk."

"This is almost as bad as being sent to take exercise with Gilbert," said Jack, with a sigh. "Well, what is it?"

"It is about Cecil. I have tried to dissuade her from accepting Madame de Vérac's invitation, but she is determined to go."

"So I supposed," said Bernard. "I never entertained the hope that you would change her resolution. When a young lady has had her head as long as Cecil has, she generally knows what she wants to do, and does it."

"I suggested what you spoke of—the probability that the Vicomtesse would try to arrange some marriage for her; and, though she was vexed at my supposing there could be any danger on *her* part, she acknowledged that she had thought of the possibility of annoyance that way; so, to prevent anything of the kind, she has determined to say nothing of her fortune, but to go—according to her own expression—merely like a moderately dowered girl."

"Nonsense!" said Bernard. "Does she suppose that out of all the Americans in Paris there will not be some one who knows the amount of her fortune?"

"That was my thought at first, but on consideration I am inclined to think there may not be. After all, though there are stories afloat, not many people here know the exact amount of the fortune she inherited. Her father was very reserved about his affairs, and how

can people estimate the value of ranches in Texas and silver mines in Mexico and real estate in San Francisco ?"

"Not easily," said Bernard, with a laugh. "Your step-father was certainly a great speculator, and all his speculations turned out well. He left a fortune of five millions, and had he lived a little longer it would have been fifty."

"Five millions is more than enough for one woman," said Mrs. Bernard. "I can't help fancying the Vicomtesse must have heard of it, else why should she have written to Cecil ? But if she really does not know—Jack, we are strange creatures ! I, who have been unhappy over the fear of Cecil's making some grand marriage, now feel disappointed at the idea of her not doing so. If ever there was a woman who ought to be a princess, it is Cecil."

Jack laughed. "She is very princess-like," he said ; "quite enough so under existing circumstances, I think. If by a grand marriage you mean a marriage with some ruined nobleman, willing to barter his title for an American fortune, I sincerely hope she may never make it. I had much rather see her marry a good, sensible, straightforward fellow like Gilbert ; but I suppose there is no hope of that."

"Not the least. I never saw a girl who thought less of marriage ; in fact, it provokes her to hear it spoken of. She has all kinds of ideas about the tremendous responsibility of wealth, and of doing some great work in the world—I don't know what, exactly."

"Nor she," said Jack, with another laugh. "It is a pity that she is cut out on such original lines. It makes her charming, but not safe."

"How can you say that when she is so clever?"

"The most gigantic mistakes in the world are the mistakes made by clever people, and there is no telling into what pitfall the cleverness of such a wilful, original young lady may finally lead her. I wish we knew more of this Vicomtesse de Vérac."

"So do I. I have felt all the time that I wished it were possible to obtain some information about her."

"I have just thought of a person who perhaps can give it," said Bernard, reflectively. "You've heard me talk of Ralph Craven?"

"Your friend who has been abroad so long? Yes."

"Paris is rather more his headquarters than anywhere else, I think—at least I generally write to a standing address there, and he answers from Russia or Egypt, as the case may be. So I think it likely he may know something of Madame de Vérac, and he will also be able to keep an eye for us on Mademoiselle Cecil."

"But how can he keep an eye on her from Russia or Egypt?"

"That could hardly be expected, but he may be in Paris; and if so, he is trustworthy in every point of view—sensible, fastidious: a man of the world, and not at all likely to fall a victim to her charms."

"Then he ought to suit Cecil exactly. I am so glad you thought of him! Pray write at once, but don't mention her fortune even to him."

"Why should I? It will not concern him at all. Confound the fellow! If he cared more for money it would be better for him: he would not be wasting his time and his talents as he is doing."

"What is he doing?"

"Nothing, as far as I am aware. He is one of the class of people who find America too crude for their refined sensibilities. But now I beg to suggest that although this promenade is exceedingly delightful, I should like to go and change my coat before dinner."

"Cecil is right," said Mrs. Bernard, dropping his arm. "One is much more highly appreciated unmarried than married. Think of Mr. Gilbert's delight at being able to walk with *her!*"

"Poor fellow, yes! How warm he must be by this time!" said Jack, sympathetically.

The gentleman thus commiserated was meanwhile unconscious of being in any degree an object for pity. He had overtaken Miss Lorimer without difficulty, and been greeted very kindly. Though aware of his admiration, she wholly ignored it, and by this ignoring, repressed it more effectually than by any possible severity; while there can be no doubt that the consciousness of its existence was pleasant to her. She would have been surprised had any one convinced her of the existence of this pleasure, but she would none the less have missed the homage had it been withdrawn. It was an atmosphere to which she had been accustomed all her life, and to which she only objected when it became too palpable. That men should admire, should even from afar off respectfully adore her, was very well; but that any of them should draw near enough to propose to marry her, filled her with a sense of repulsion and indignation. "How dare he!" was always her first haughty thought, and it is safe to say that no man whose wooing she rejected ever returned to encounter rejection again.

She was sometimes reasonable enough to ask herself by what possible right she felt in this manner—why it was she conceived her dignity outraged by proposals over which other women waxed exultant as proofs of power, or regretted as suffering they had no alternative but to inflict. Such questioning was vain : the feeling was too instinctive to be reasoned away, nor was it in any degree due to the circumstances of her life. It was no doubt owing to these circumstances—to her great gifts of wealth and beauty—that it had been brought into prominent exercise ; but it would have existed in the same force had her position been wholly different, since its spring lay deep in a nature too proud to rate its value by extraneous things.

Mr. Gilbert, wiser than many of those who had gone before him in the perilous path of admiration for Miss Lorimer, knew exactly how hopeless was any expression of the feeling which he entertained for her. He was too sensible to deceive himself for an instant, and he often laughed in not very mirthful fashion over the folly which made him continue to emulate a moth, and singe his wings in the vestal flame that allured him. "But I am not like other men," he sometimes remarked to himself. "A hopeless passion is the only kind of a passion possible for me, because I should have so poor an opinion of the woman who could be satisfied to find her ideal—and I would not want a woman who did not have an ideal—in *me*, that she would fall from her pedestal at once."

In this whimsical manner he consoled himself for the fact that nothing could be imagined more unlikely than that Cecil Lorimer would find her ideal in him ; and, secure in the belief that no other man was any nearer

his goddess than himself, he was content to worship from afar—the more readily since she was a woman whom no man of intellectual culture could fail to enjoy meeting on other grounds than those of mere sentiment. If in her somewhat crude youth it was not possible to pay her the famous compliment paid long ago to a noble woman, and say that "it was a liberal education to have loved her," it was possible—at least Gilbert felt it possible—to have been led to many high sources of interest and pleasure through loving her.

These two, therefore, were very good friends, notwithstanding the fact that it was not entirely friendly regard that looked out of Gilbert's eyes, and that his companion was too thoroughly a woman not to be aware of this. When Leo's welcome told her whose was the quick step along the shaded road behind her, she turned with a cordial smile.

"Mrs. Bernard encouraged me to come," said Gilbert. "I hope I don't disturb you."

"Not at all," she replied. "I am very glad to see you, and Leo speaks for himself."

"He certainly does. Hold your tongue, sir!"—for Leo was still uttering short barks expressive of delight. "What a beautiful dog he has become!"

"Has he not? Did you think he would be so pretty when you gave him to me?"

"Oh, yes; for I knew his parents—splendid imported dogs both. It is almost a pity so fine a dog should not be trained for sport."

"Then take him and train him, will you not? Oh, I know what you will say"—as Gilbert looked vexed at having let his thought unconsciously escape—"that you gave him to me for my pleasure. Well, he has given

me a great deal of pleasure ; but now that I am going away, I should like for you to take him and keep him, if you will. Nelly and Jack care little for dogs."

"Of course I will take him and keep him if you wish it," said Gilbert, seriously. "But I am sorry to hear that you are going away. May I ask where?"

"Only to Paris, which seems very near at hand in this age of the world, although I have never been there."

"When do you go?"

"Not for a week or two, so you will not be called upon to take Leo home with you to-night. But one always feels like making one's arrangements for departure as soon as a decision is taken—at least I do."

"I fancy you are always ready for anything," said Gilbert. "There is a soldierly quality of promptitude about you that one does not often see in a woman."

"That is because I was trained by a man. My father taught me early how important promptitude is in life, and how irritating the lack of it may be."

"A wise teaching, but many women would not have profited by it."

"I think I am more of a man than a woman," said the girl, laughing. "I have always thought so. I have a passion for men's work, and I don't like women's work at all. If I were a man my ambition would be boundless. I should never rest until I was prime minister of some great country, or general-in-chief of some great army."

"You would permit your friends to salute you from afar, I hope," said Gilbert, laughing too, yet thinking, with the painful sense of remoteness which is familiar to all who have loved hopelessly, that she looked fit to

rule a country or to lead an army, woman though she was. "I cannot help fancying," he added involuntarily, "that you will play some such part in the world, though it will be as inspirer rather than doer."

"I am afraid that I am not humble enough to care to achieve through others," she said. "Is it not a fortunate thing that, having such a vaulting ambition, I should not possess the opportunity for it to overleap itself, as vaulting ambitions are likely to do? Disappointment must be a terrible thing in such a case."

"And to fall, worse than never to have climbed."

"But what would become of the world if nobody cared to climb?"

"That is hard to say, for there are always people glad to climb at any possible risk. The world is rather in need of a few more quiet people like myself, who prefer that others should have both the labor and the glory of such undertakings."

"I really think you are the most enviable person I know," said Cecil. "You are so thoroughly content with your lot, so perfectly sure of gaining all that you want from life. You are to me an embodied essay on the wisdom of moderate desires."

"Yes," said Gilbert, not without a secret sense of amusement at the unconscious irony of her words. "My desires are, generally speaking, very moderate; and if by chance I fix my eyes on something beyond my reach, I do not deceive myself with false hopes of ever gaining it; but, recognizing its excellence, I am glad that the world is richer for possessing it—though I am not, and never can be."

CHAPTER III.

AN OCEAN ACQUAINTANCE.

"NOW," said Cecil, "is not this delightful? And do you not feel better already?"

She spoke to a lady who leaned on her arm as they stepped together on the deck of the great ocean steamer, which, with wings spread to the favoring breeze, was cleaving her way through the outspread liquid plain toward the Old World. The long decks were filled with people, for the smooth sea and bright sunshine had brought out all but the most incorrigible in seasickness. Apparently, however, Miss Lorimer's companion was of the latter order; for as they emerged, she put up her hand to shut out the sight of the dancing, glittering waves, which Cecil found so exhilarating.

"Oh," she said, "I really cannot stand it! You must let me go down again."

"No, no," said Cecil, inflexibly. "Now that you are here, you must stay. I will make you very comfortable, and you need not look at the waves if you don't like. But where is Mr. Marriott? He ought to be here to arrange your chair."

She looked around, but the person whom she sought was not in sight—neither among the energetic promenaders of the deck, nor the loiterers at the taffrail. As

she hesitated an instant, a gentleman standing near stepped forward.

"Can I be of any assistance?" he asked, courteously.

"Thanks, yes—if you will be so kind," Cecil replied. "Please look among those deck chairs"—pointing to a row folded up, standing on end—"for one that has 'Marriott' or 'Lorimer' written on the back, and place it for this young lady."

"My dear Cecil, I can *never* stay!" remonstrated the latter.

"Oh, yes, you can!" Cecil answered, with a cheerful positiveness. "That is one of our chairs," she added, as the gentleman who had volunteered his services drew one from the ranks. "Now if you will kindly open it?"

He not only opened, but found a secure, sheltered position for it; and when a maid came up with her arms full of rugs and wraps, he assisted very deftly in arranging them for the pale girl, who, finding remonstrance useless, resigned herself, and sank into the seat provided for her.

"Now I am sure that in a little while you will feel better," said Cecil, covering her up. "If you do not, of course we must submit to let you be miserable in your own way; but even for misery I think this is better than that close state-room."

Then, having folded the soft wraps all around the passive figure, she turned to the gentleman who had come to their assistance.

"We are very much obliged," she said, graciously. "You have been very kind."

"I am happy to have been of use," he answered, lifting his hat. As he walked away, he smiled a little—a smile that was for Miss Lorimer's princess-like tone.

It was neither haughty nor patronizing, but simply that of one who condescended a little in addressing her fellow-creatures—a tone that might have been offensive had it not been so evidently unconscious. But, recognizing this unconsciousness, the man whom she had just addressed thought that the manner suited her appearance—the appearance which he had admired during the two or three days they had been on shipboard together. He was alone, and not very sociably inclined, so he had the more leisure to observe the beautiful, stately girl, who had indeed been followed by many eyes beside his own, as she walked up and down the deck during the first day or two out, when she was almost the only lady visible.

He was himself a man at whom most women would have glanced twice, and to whom they might have been gracious in a different fashion from Cecil's. Tall and slender, with a firmly-knit and admirably-proportioned figure, there was a look of distinction about him which was quite unmistakable. The stamp of race was set upon him from the top of his well-carried head to the ends of his slender yet muscular-looking hands. Under favorable circumstances he would have been a handsome man, but just now he looked worn and ill; his refined features were sharply outlined, the pallor of his skin was perceptible even through the bronze which the sun had laid upon it, and there was a shadow of sadness or care in his dark, sombre eyes.

He found his own chair, and established himself with a book in a quiet corner; but it was impossible not to glance now and then toward the invalid whom he had aided in establishing, and the graceful, elastic figure that hovered around her—now sitting down for a few minutes, then taking a turn or two on the deck; but

whether sitting, standing, or walking, ever full of life, movement, ease, and grace. In truth, as Cecil was at that time remarking, the air of the ocean had upon her a most stimulating effect.

"It is so strange to see you lying there pale and indifferent," she said to her friend. "This air acts upon me like a divine nectar and tonic. I do not feel as if pain could exist in the world."

"Do you not?" observed her listener, languidly. "Then I only wish I could give you my sensations for a time."

"Poor Grace! I wish I could take them," was the quick answer. "If I only could, you would be on your feet in five minutes, enjoying all this glorious day and scene."

"And you would be lying here? I cannot fancy that. I am sure your will would be strong enough to overcome even a rebellious stomach."

Cecil laughed. "You are getting better," she said. "Until I brought you up on deck you had not energy enough to be sarcastic. But indeed I always felt great sympathy with the character in one of the eerie stories of Poe, with which I used to curdle my blood when I was a child, who declared that 'man does not yield himself to death save through the weakness of his own feeble will.'"

"Then I shall expect you to be a female Wandering Jew."

"Am I so very strong in will? Every one accuses me of it; but it is not an amiable or a desirable characteristic."

"It is not unamiable—in you," said Grace Marriott. "Most wilful people are very selfish, but I do not think

you would insist upon having your own way if it would injure any one else."

"I hope not," said Cecil, seriously. "But one cannot be sure. One is always liable to be betrayed by the defects of one's qualities. I suppose I ought to cultivate humility and deference to the opinions of others, but nature is very strong in me."

"Nature is strong in most of us," said Grace; "but perhaps"—with a glance at the spirited profile beside her—"stronger in you than in most people. If it is true that we can gain happiness and peace only by subduing nature, I am sorry for the struggle that is before you."

Cecil glanced at her with a slightly startled look. "The struggle!" she repeated. "Is there a struggle before me? I am not sure that I care to subdue my natural impulses. So long as they do no harm to others, why should I?"

"The answer to that would lead us very far," said her companion, "and I am hardly in condition either to argue or expound. You remind me of an untried soldier, my dear Cecil—all bravery, ardor, and self-confidence. I am afraid the last, at least, must be a little shaken. But here comes John—in time to put a stop to my prophecies."

There was a great contrast between the pale, delicate speaker and the stout, good-looking man on the sunny side of middle-age, with his general air of prosperity and satisfaction with life, who now came up. But they were brother and sister, nevertheless, though with a wide gulf of years between them—one being the eldest and the other the youngest of a large family—and a wider gulf of different tastes and sympathies. Sensitive, intellectual, artistic to her finger-tips, Grace Marriott was

now on her way to Europe to complete her studies in art, while her brother was crossing over to visit his family—his wife finding it more entertaining to live abroad than in America, and having an excellent excuse in the education of the children ; while Mr. Marriott was himself one of the obliging husbands who spend their days in the accumulation of means to support an establishment in Paris or Dresden, where they are received as guests once or twice a year.

"So, Grace, you are out at last, are you ?" he said as he came up. "I hope you are feeling better ? I knew you would once you were on deck. You ought to have let me bring you up yesterday."

"Yesterday was too rough," said Cecil. "She would not have enjoyed it. But I am sure she is better for being out to-day."

"You brought her up, did you ?" said Mr. Marriott, regarding the speaker with an admiring smile. "I would have been on hand if I had known ; but I fancy you were the best person, after all. You were made to carry everything before you, Miss Cecil."

"So Grace has just been telling me," said Cecil. "But I looked for you when we came on deck. I wanted you to arrange the chair and settle her comfortably. *I* could not leave her to do it, and Maria has not got her sea legs at all."

"I should think not," said Mr. Marriott, with a laugh —for Maria (Miss Lorimer's maid) had been so far conspicuously helpless. "I went to the smoking-room, and I stayed a little longer than I intended," he added ; "but of course you had no difficulty in finding somebody to arrange things for you."

"Oh, not the least !" said Cecil, carelessly. "There

is always a man to do such things ; but one prefers not to accept services from strangers."

"That depends on the stranger," observed Grace. "This one was very kind, and evidently a gentleman."

"Without doubt," said Cecil ; "but one prefers an acquaintance. Now, Mr. Marriott, what do you think of a turn up and down the deck ?"

Mr. Marriott replied that he would be delighted, having the usual restlessness of masculine humanity on board ship, and being not at all averse to the pleasure of such a companion. So, after inquiring if there was anything Grace wanted, or was likely to want, and having received an assurance in the negative, Miss Lorimer walked away with him.

They had not been gone very long before a pair of observant eyes perceived that Grace's position had become less pleasant. Her chair had at first been placed in shadow, but the sun in travelling toward the meridian had found her out, and shone down upon her with uncomfortable brightness. She looked around when she became conscious of this, but neither her brother nor Cecil was in sight. Then she pulled a veil over her face, but the glare was still disagreeable. To rise, however, was impossible : she could not have trusted herself on her feet for an instant without support, apart from the fact that she was wrapped like a mummy in folds from which she could not have disembarrassed herself without assistance. She closed her eyes, therefore, and resigned herself to the position—but only to be startled the next moment by a pleasantly-modulated voice saying over her head :

"Pardon me, but I think you are uncomfortable. Shall I not move your chair ?"

She looked up to see the same dark, clear-cut face that bent over her before. Its kindness and courtesy were alike unmistakable.

"You are very good," she said. "I do find the glare disagreeable; but it is so troublesome to rise, and my friends will be here in a short time."

"There is no reason why you should rise," said the gentleman. "I can draw your chair into the shade without disturbing you."

He laid his hand on the back as he spoke, and drew it, evidently with ease, a few feet toward the shaded part of the deck.

"I hope that did not discompose you," he said as he paused.

"Not at all," answered Miss Marriott, smiling. "This is vastly more pleasant. Thank you very much. How kind of you to have observed that the sun had found me out!"

"Oh, I felt myself responsible for your position since I had arranged it." Then, after a brief pause, and encouraged by her pleasant manner, "I hope you are feeling better?"

"Yes," she replied. "I must acknowledge that being on deck has helped me. I fought against coming, but my friend brought me up whether I would or no."

The stranger smiled a little, as he had smiled at Cecil's tone in thanking him. He was not surprised by this report of her arbitrary proceedings, but he made no comment—only remarked that it was always best in case of sea-sickness to remain on deck as much as possible. "Especially when the weather is fine," he added;

"for in what sailors call 'dirty weather,' ladies at least must stay below."

"I hope we shall have no such weather," said Miss Marriott, anxiously.

"Oh, the Atlantic is certain to give us at least one rough tossing before it lets us go," he answered. "At this season we are certain of nothing but uncertain weather, you know."

"And icebergs. All our friends had something cheering to say about *them* before we started."

"It is too early for any serious danger from ice, I think. The bergs have hardly set out on their travels from the Arctic regions yet."

"Apart from the danger, I should like to see some of them," said Grace, with the artist shining in her eyes.

"They are really not much worth seeing," answered her companion, "except in extraordinary cases. If you ask our captain, I am sure he will tell you that there is nothing *he* would not rather see."

"Oh, of course!" she replied, with a laugh.

By such easy and commonplace steps these two were advancing toward acquaintance, when Cecil and Mr. Marriott returned. They were astonished to find that Grace's chair had shifted its position, until they perceived the young man who stood talking to her. As they approached, Grace said:

"Are you surprised to see that a mummy can move? But the sun invaded my corner, and this gentleman came to my assistance a second time, and drew me into the shade."

"Very kind of you," said Mr. Marriott, turning to the stranger, who on his part bowed and walked away. He did not wish these people to fancy that he desired

to make their acquaintance. But Mr. Marriott followed him. "My sister has been twice indebted to you," he said. Then he opened a passenger-list in his hands. "When people are shut up on shipboard together they should be sociable," he added. "This is as good as an exchange of cards. Here is my name; will you point out yours?"

It was impossible to resist this frank friendliness, and indeed the other had no wish to do so. He indicated his name, and Mr. Marriott read it aloud.

"Tyrconnel. Ah, yes! A fine name—historical association and all that. Proves Irish descent."

"Naturally," was the reply. "I am an Irishman."

"Ah, yes!" said Mr. Marriott again. "Curious this thing of national types," he went on the next moment. "I see now that you could not be anything else."

When he rejoined his sister and Cecil, he explained his meaning more fully. "Any one who is at all cosmopolitan in his knowledge, can generally tell nationality at a glance," he said. "I have observed that man several times—there's a remarkable distinction about him—and I could not quite decide what he was. He has a foreign look, but I saw that he did not belong to the Continent, and he has too much grace and fire about him for an Englishman. But the matter is plain now—he is an Irishman, and every one knows that there is no finer type of gentleman in Europe than the Irish gentleman."

Mr. Marriott cultivated his new acquaintance after this, and when Cecil came on deck in the afternoon, for a promenade before dinner, he had further information respecting him to give.

"I advise you to talk to that man," he said. "I

think he would interest you. He is very cultivated, and has seen a great deal of the world ; he is on his way from Australia to Ireland now."

"Then our voyage is only the end of a long journey for him," observed Cecil. "But one cannot talk to a man who does not give one the opportunity to do so."

"I'll provide the opportunity," said Mr. Marriott.

Not many minutes later he perceived the man of whom they spoke standing by the taffrail, looking westward, where the sun was going down in the tossing waves with a good deal of sunset pomp, and the long track of foam which the vessel left behind her was gilded with its parting rays. He started a little when Mr. Marriott, with Cecil on his arm, suddenly drew up near him.

"Promise of many more charming days in that," said the former, with an easy nod toward the sunset.

"I am not sure of it," answered the other, lifting his hat to the young lady. "It is not exactly a sky that sailors like, and I observe that the breeze is freshening in the northeast. I fear we shall have bad weather soon."

"You seem to be something of a sailor yourself," said Cecil, looking at him.

"Oh, no," he replied. "I have only the familiarity with the sea of one who has been on it a good deal."

"I have never been on it for a long voyage before," she said ; "and I do not feel now as if I could ever again be content to be away from it. In fact, I want to take the longest voyage practicable—to go around the world."

"Very easily done in these days," said Mr. Marriott.

"But hardly worth doing unless with sufficient

time," remarked their new acquaintance. "One should take two or three years for such a journey as that."

"Two or three years!" repeated Mr. Marriott. "Well, if you wanted to take out naturalization papers in every country on your route, perhaps so. But *I* could do the thing—"

"In eighty days?" asked Cecil, smiling.

"I should not care to attempt *that*, but in ten months with ease."

"I suppose it would be very easy to put a girdle around the earth in ten months," she said. "But, you see, my delight would be in the voyage, not in the end of it; so I would like to prolong it as much as possible. I wish there was some way to prolong this voyage! Why are people so anxious to reach the shore, where all their cares lie in wait for them? I should think that every one would be glad of the respite of being at sea, and would like to prolong such a period of rest."

"You forget that some of us have people on the shore whom we are very anxious to see," said Mr. Marriott; "and the rest are in a fever to take up again those cares of which you talk, as if *you* could know anything about them!"

Cecil lifted her head with the haughtiness which was always a natural impulse with her. What did this man know of her, that he should venture to take such an easy and familiar tone?

"If I knew nothing of human cares I should be a very extraordinary person," she said, coldly. "But here come the sailors to shift the sails. It is all a mystery to me, but I like to watch it."

While she watched it, the man leaning against the

side of the ship watched her—the changing expressions of the beautiful, noble face—and wondered a little what the cares could be which she was anxious to prolong her voyage to escape.

CHAPTER IV.

A COLLISION AT SEA.

IT is almost unnecessary to say that Miss Lorimer's slight impulse of haughtiness had given a wrong impression, and that she was not anxious to prolong the voyage in order to escape her cares, of which Mr. Marriott was right in supposing that she had few if any. But her idle wish was destined to be gratified in a manner as unexpected as it was unwelcome to most of those on board.

The prophesied rough weather arrived before morning. By midnight the gale was upon them, and the rolling and pitching of the ship rendered sleep difficult to all but the most accustomed sailors. Few passengers appeared at breakfast the next morning, and of these only two or three ladies. Among them, however, was Miss Lorimer, who had resolutely struggled through the difficulties of a toilet, and made her appearance, to be greeted with applause by Mr. Marriott, who was applying himself to his breakfast with very slight diminution of his usual appetite.

"Delighted to see you!" he said. "I hardly thought that even your pluck would be equal to an appearance this morning."

"It *is* rather hard to keep one's feet," said Cecil, laughing. "But I could not endure to remain in the

state-room. Poor Grace ! She is prostrate in her berth again."

"She has plenty of companions in misery to-day," answered Mr. Marriott. "You see how empty the saloon is."

Cecil glanced around, encountered a pair of dark eyes, and after an instant's hesitation bowed to her acquaintance of the previous evening.

"Yonder is the man who prophesied this horrid weather," she said ; "and he looks as if he were enjoying it."

"He's a good sailor, I fancy," observed Mr. Marriott. "He has been pretty much all over the world. We were talking in the smoking-room last night, and he was telling me a good deal about Borneo."

"What has taken him to such places ? Love of adventure or amusement ?"

"He did not say, but I infer that his object was to make money. He spoke of the possibilities of fortune in those countries, but said that a man must give the best years of his life to make it."

"And he apparently has not given the best years of his"—with another glance at the face opposite. "It seems a very pitiful thing to do—to give one's best years just to accumulate money," she added after a moment.

"Hm!" said Mr. Marriott. "It is very easy to despise money if one is so lucky as to have it ; but if one has not got it, then one has no choice but to give one's life to making it."

"Don't think I am so foolish as to despise money," said Cecil. "What I mean is that it seems a pitiful thing to make *that* the supreme end, if one has been fitted for other work ; and this man looks as if he had intellectual capacities."

"Intellectual capacities without means behind them are generally a snare and a delusion," replied Mr. Marriott.

"Perhaps so," said Cecil, who perceived the futility of argument. "But tell me, what are the prospects for to-day? Is there no hope of getting on deck?"

"None for you, I'm afraid. It may be possible for you to get to the top of the companion and put your head out—that is all."

So much as this was accomplished after breakfast, and Cecil was standing at the top of the companion with her head out of the door, surveying rather disconsolately the scene of wet decks, gray, wild sea, and driving rain, when Tyrconnel came up the broad, zinc-covered steps, and, pausing, steadied himself with one hand, while with the other he took off the little cap that fitted closely over his dark hair.

"I am afraid you find this a very disagreeable outlook," he said, sympathetically.

"It is horrid," she answered, looking at him reproachfully. "Your bad weather has come, and we are all prisoners."

"I am sorry," he said, smiling at her tone; "but the prophet, you know, is not accountable for the evil he foresees."

"Foresee something better, then. Tell me when this will be over."

"I hope it may not last more than twenty-four hours, but it is impossible to tell positively." He paused an instant, then added: "It is very unpleasant, but those who are not seasick may endure it with philosophy."

"I am thinking of those who are sea-sick more than of myself," said Cecil. "Poor souls! they are so miserable, and will be miserable as long as it lasts."

"Yes, but since one has not the least power to relieve them, they must bear their misery, as we all have to bear incurable evils in the course of our lives."

Cecil looked at him a little curiously, and he caught her glance quickly.

"That does not mean that I am hard-hearted, but only that I am philosophical for others as well as for myself," he said.

"I was wondering," she observed, rather dryly, "if you were as philosophical for yourself as for others."

"I don't think I fail in it," he said, quietly. "What can't be cured *must* be endured, and I never could see the use of wasting one's strength in complaint."

She was silent for a minute. Indeed the noise of the wind and sea made conversation difficult. But presently there was a slight lull, and since he was still standing, holding the opposite side of the door to her own, she answered his last speech :

"I wonder if there are many things that cannot be cured ? I have not much sympathy with resignation. I always feel as if there must be a means to cure anything, if one had but energy enough to apply it."

He smiled again as he looked at her. Her sentiments were so entirely in keeping with her appearance—with the high courage, the self-confidence, and the ignorance of the stern side of life which everything about her indicated. He hardly knew how to answer them, having himself a very intimate knowledge of obstacles which no energy could bend, misfortunes which no exercise of will could overcome.

"I think," he said at length, "that you forget how many things there are in the world for which there is no cure. Not to speak of death, there are many minor

evils which one can only endure—the loss of a limb, the loss of fortune, or a storm at sea, for example."

"Sometimes resolution can save even the loss of a limb," she said. "I know a man who was wounded during the war, and the surgeons wanted to amputate his leg. He refused absolutely to allow them to do so, and kept a pistol under his pillow, with which he threatened to shoot the first man who attempted it. They declared that he would die, but he got well, and has his leg to-day."

The young man laughed. "I see that you are provided with examples to prove your theory. But you must acknowledge that that was an exceptional case. If every one followed your friend's example, we should have many deaths from mortification. He took the risk, I presume ; but, under ordinary circumstances, it is not a risk which a man has a right to take."

"I only gave that as an example of what can be done sometimes by a determined person to avert misfortune," she said. "It seems to me that people are too prone to sit down under calamity and accept things as inevitable. A little resolution—"

Just then her companion, who was looking seaward, laid his hand on her arm, drew her back quickly, and closed the door.

"There is a wave coming," he said, "which would drench you."

It broke over the deck as he spoke, with a mighty sound, and dashed against the closed door. The great ship quivered like a living thing under the strong buffet of the sea ; and Cecil, with a sense as if everything solid were slipping from under her, found herself clinging to the hand that had drawn her back. It was only

for a moment, however. She recovered herself and her self-command as the ship recovered from its plunge, and relinquished the living support for the side of the door again.

"The worst of a storm at sea is that it makes one very helpless," she said when she could speak. "But it was kind of you to be so quick. Now can we open the door again?"

"It would hardly be safe," he answered. "The gale is evidently increasing, and we may expect these waves at recurring intervals. I think, perhaps, you had better let me take you below."

"Oh, I cannot give you that trouble. Mr. Marriott said he would come for me presently." She looked at the ladies' cabin just opposite the recess in which they stood. "I think I will go in there," she added. "One has a view of the decks and the sea from the windows. That will be better than being shut up below."

"If you will take my arm, then—you cannot walk without support."

It being incontestable even to herself that she could not, she accepted his support to the cabin—usually a place sacred to convalescent sea sickness, but to-day without any occupants whatever—where he established her on one of the sofas, with a recommendation to be careful lest a lurch of the ship should throw her off.

"And now," he said, "if you would like me to tell Mr. Marriott where you are, I am on my way to the smoking-room."

"You will find him there, no doubt," said Cecil. "Just mention, please, that you left me here; for I should not like to remain for an indefinite length of

time, and I suppose I could not get down that companion-way alone."

"I hope that you will not make the attempt," said her new acquaintance.

Then he bowed and left her; and as she saw him let himself out of the door that he had closed a few minutes before, and pass rapidly along the deck past her mist-blurred window, she felt that the difference between a man and a woman, on shipboard at least, was very unfair.

Mr. Marriott soon made his appearance, and took her below, where she resigned herself to confinement and dulness. The gale did not diminish as the day went on, and night closed upon them heavy, dark and murky.

After dinner the few passengers able to be out of their state-rooms were scattered over the saloon, engaged in such occupations as the rolling of the ship rendered practicable. Cecil was sitting at one of the tables trying to read, and fighting the qualms that assailed her now and then, when there came a sudden shock—a crash that vibrated through every timber of the ship, and brought every man in the saloon to his feet, pale and breathless. Then came a fearful, grinding, crushing noise, as if every screw and plank were being torn apart; and through it all the trampling rush of many feet on the deck above was heard even over the noise of the storm.

"We have had a collision!" "We are going to the bottom!" were exclamations uttered on all sides, mingled with cries of terror and dismay. None of these, however, came from Cecil's lips. She, too, had risen to her feet, but she stood pale and silent, clutching the table to steady herself, with a vision be-

fore her eyes of the wild, stormy sea outside. Were they, indeed, going down into those terrible waters? She saw them so vividly that she hardly saw anything else, until a voice spoke to her, and she looked up into a pair of dark eyes that had already grown familiar.

"Keep quiet," said their possessor, in a calm tone. "I am going to find out what is the matter, and I will return as soon as possible to let you know."

There was something in his face which filled her with a sense of confidence in his courage and coolness. She extended her hand suddenly with a gesture of appeal.

"If you find that it is serious," she said—"if we are likely to go down—will you come and help me to the deck? I could not bear to stay here, and Mr. Marriott will have his sister to care for."

"I promise," he answered, in a tone which said more than the words. "Do not fear. Trust in God—and pray."

The next instant he was gone in the general movement toward the deck, while Cecil sat down again and waited, apparently unmoved by all the babel of panic-stricken voices around her. She knew that he would return, and she had been calmed by his voice as by the touch of a strong hand. His words were still ringing in her ears. "Trust in God—and pray," he had said, like one who utters involuntarily the deepest thought of his soul; and she found herself repeating the words, "Trust in God." Here—now—face to face with death, did she trust in Him? She hardly knew. Her belief in Him had been so conventional, her trust in Him so vague, that she felt like one who in direst need tries to convert a shadow into a reality, and her soul was too

candid for her to deceive herself into fancying that she could do so. Pray? Well, she had offered a lip homage all her life—set forms of words with more or less sense of reverence attached; but none of them came to her now, or seemed worthy of remembrance in this crisis of peril, when life was perhaps measured by moments. She put her hands over her eyes, while her inarticulate thoughts tried to frame themselves into an appeal to the God who to her, as to the Athenians of old, was truly "unknown."

Presently she was roused by a voice, and, looking up, she saw one of the ship's officers endeavoring to make himself heard. He was trying to quiet the tumult and reassure the terror-stricken passengers. "Owing to the darkness," he said, "we have had a collision with an iceberg, and the ship is somewhat injured, but not dangerously. We have just made an examination which assures us of this. At present we are in no danger."

Then he escaped from the storm of questions ready to be poured upon him, and the relieved yet still apprehensive passengers had no resource but to talk to one another, and to assail with their inquiries the chief steward, who now made his appearance.

But Cecil sat perfectly quiet, as if obeying a command. Now that it was in a manner over, she felt that the shock had not been less to her than to the ship. Although her courage and her self-control had not failed, she had tasted, as it were, the bitterness of death in those wild, dark waters raging without; for the first time in her life she had realized the awfulness of what lay beyond the portals of mortality, and she felt herself shaken in every fibre. She remained, therefore, quite still and very pale, with her eyes cast down, so that she

did not observe the man who again approached her, until he spoke.

"I am glad to tell you, Miss Lorimer," he said, "that, as far as can be ascertained, we are not in danger. You have heard, no doubt, that we have had a collision with an iceberg. The ship is much injured, but, thanks to her water-tight compartments, is not dangerously disabled."

She looked up at him with calmness, but he saw in her eyes how deeply she had been moved.

"I am grateful," she said after a moment. "It has been a narrow escape, has it not?"

"Very narrow. Had not our speed been slackened, from the captain's knowledge of danger, the ship would have driven against the berg with much greater force, and would have been so seriously damaged that she must have gone down."

"But since she is disabled in a degree, is there no probability, with this sea, of our going down yet?"

"The officers think not. Of course, if the gale increased, our situation would be rendered more perilous by the accident. But it is subsiding."

They were silent for a moment, then Cecil said: "You were kind to return so soon to tell me this. I hope you understand why I made that appeal. It seemed so terrible to die *here!* I felt that I would rather face any fate on deck."

"I had already decided what I should do for you if the ship were going down," he said. "One values one's own life at such times only for the use one can make of it for others. And I confess I feared the worst."

Despite herself, Cecil shuddered. "It would have

been terrible," she said, "to go down into that black abyss of raging water. I never before realized how awful death might be. I have always fancied that I should be brave—that I should not fear it."

"Courage does not mean insensibility to danger," he answered. "If the worst had come, I am sure you would have been brave in meeting it. But the soul that did not quail before the face—the unexpected and terrible face—of death would hardly be a soul at all."

Something in his tone and manner impressed her deeply. She looked up into two dark, grave eyes that seemed accustomed to regard dangers.

"I suppose," she said, abruptly, "that when you told me to trust in God, you felt that trust yourself?"

"Surely yes," he answered. "Does that seem to you strange? Do you not think that,

'Woe being come, the soul is dumb that crieth not on God'?"

"If it has not cried on Him at other times, would there be much avail in crying then?" she asked. "And it seems not only a presumptuous but almost a contemptible thing to fly to God in the hour of danger, after having forgotten and ignored Him when we felt no need of help."

He smiled at her tone. "We are all more or less guilty of such forgetfulness," he answered. "But our best hope is that God will not think us presumptuous for calling on Him in our need. Where else can we turn?"

Cecil did not answer for a moment; then she said, gravely: "I should not think much of a friend who forgot me in his prosperity, and came to me only in his need. I might be glad to relieve the need, but I should

respect him very little. So God, I am sure, can respect very little those who cry to Him only when danger comes."

"He will certainly not reward them as He will more generous souls," said Tyrconnel. "But our weakness is our best excuse."

"I am afraid it is not an excuse that I like to plead," she said. "But I must thank you for making me think of these things, as well as for your kindness. Will you add to the last now by taking me to poor Grace?"

CHAPTER V.

"THIS IS OUR WORLD—FOR A WEEK."

AND so Cecil had her wish ; for it was known the next day that the ship was so much disabled that the captain was obliged to put into Halifax, and that the passengers would be sent from there either to Liverpool or back to New York, if they could not wait until the necessary repairs rendered the steamer able to complete her voyage.

When this announcement was made, there was some chafing against the delay on the part of those who were anxious to cross in the shortest possible time ; but the majority of the passengers were sufficiently grateful for their escape to bear the delay with philosophy. As for Miss Lorimer, she laughed when she was told of it.

"I feel like Jonah," she said—"as if I ought to be cast overboard. I don't suppose that my desire that the voyage should be prolonged had anything to do with the accident, but I have a sense of guilt, nevertheless."

"I hardly suppose that your desire had much to do with it," said Mr. Marriott ; "but I would not advise you to accuse yourself in the hearing of some of the passengers. They might try the Jonah business, for they are not pleased at the prospect before us."

"They are very ungrateful, then," said Cecil. "They ought to think of where they might be at this moment."

"Men don't think of such things any longer than they can help," observed Miss Marriott, who did not like to think of them herself.

The great steamer, with her smashed bowsprit, was therefore put about for Halifax, and most of those on board resigned themselves with patience to the prolongation of their voyage. Happily for their comfort, the weather moderated, the sea grew smooth, and the run was quickly and safely made. By the time they reached Halifax, Tyrconnel seemed quite one of the Marriott party; for they all adopted him cordially into their favor, and Mr. Marriott was delighted to be relieved of some of his duties as escort. If another man was willing to place chairs, to bring up shawls and rugs, and make himself generally useful, Mr. Marriott was only too happy to allow him to do so, while he took his own ease in the smoking-room.

He was not in the smoking-room, however, when they entered the Nova Scotian harbor, but was standing on deck, with his attention fastened on the town that lay before them, when Tyrconnel, whose eyes were elsewhere, suddenly turned to him.

"We are in luck," he said. "Yonder is the Allan steamer for England. I feared we should miss it. We must make our application for passage at once, for she will be able to receive only a limited number of passengers."

"And it will be first come first served," said Mr. Marriott. "Thanks for the suggestion. I'll attend to the matter immediately. You are coming with us, of course?"

"Yes. I must get on as quickly as possible, if I should be forced to take a berth in the steerage."

But fortunately there was no such necessity. Owing to the promptness of their application, good though confined quarters were obtained for all the party ; their effects were transferred from one vessel to the other, and when everything was satisfactorily settled there was still enough of the day left in which to see all that was worth seeing in Halifax. This speedily resolved itself into the view from the citadel ; for the town, despite its magnificent situation, is of the most commonplace description. The rough streets and shabby houses were forgotten though, when the little group, having climbed the hill which the fortress crowns, stood on its greensward, and looked out over the vast expanse of the Atlantic. From this height and at this hour—for the sun was touching the horizon—the sea wore an aspect of perfect calm and a tint of lucid, exquisite color, as it stretched away to the luminous sky, into which it softly melted.

"How charming!" exclaimed Cecil. "I am glad that our way lies over this great plain, and not away from it."

"I am glad that we are going to Europe," said Grace, who stood beside her ; "but I confess I dislike this deceitful ocean, that looks so peaceful now and can be so dreadful. What if we should meet more icebergs?"

"Are you afraid of them?" asked Cecil. "I think they have done their worst to us, and it has not been very bad."

"Our captain would not agree with you," said Mr. Marriott, looking down on the vessel they had quitted, which presented a sad sight, with her headwork carried away, her bow in splinters, and her forecastle deck torn up.

"I think our captain is too good a sailor not to agree with Miss Lorimer," said Tyrconnel. "He is thoroughly aware how much worse the accident might have been."

"We might have been food for fishes at this moment," said Grace. "Of course one knows that, and it does not tend to reassure one very much in going forth to meet more icebergs."

"I shall never choose this season for going abroad again," said Mr. Marriott. "But after one has got so far, it seems a pity not to go on."

"Would anything induce you to go back?" asked Cecil. "For my part I feel twice as much eagerness to pursue the voyage as I felt to set out on it. Difficulty and peril only fill me with the desire to overcome them."

As she uttered the last words she met Tyrconnel's eyes, and their expression was so unconsciously curious that she colored quickly. A minute or two later, when Mr. Marriott moved away, together with Grace, she turned to him.

"Do you think me very absurd to be talking of difficulty and peril?" she asked, abruptly. "But, after all, the most prosperous and commonplace life—I grant that mine is both—must occasionally learn what they are, and I do not believe that I am mistaken in feeling that they nerve my resolution rather than weaken it."

"One need only look at you to be sure of that," he answered, quietly. "You give me the impression—if you will pardon me for saying so—of a courage that is dauntless, and a resolution which it would be hard for any obstacles to bend. Yet"—his voice changed a little—"there are obstacles in life before which one *must*

bend, difficulties over which it is impossible to ride rough-shod. I was wondering, when you spoke a moment ago, how your courage and resolution would serve you if you should be brought face to face with these."

He looked away from her as he uttered the last words, out over the ocean, toward the liquid sky-line beyond which the Old World lay. Cecil was quick to receive impressions, and she felt that he was looking straight toward such obstacles and difficulties as those of which he spoke. A shadow came into his eyes, deepening their darkness, and his lips set themselves firmly together. "He has some great trouble," she said to herself, with a keen sense of interest. "I wish I could ask him what it is."

This being impossible, she answered his last speech after a slight hesitation. "There must, of course, be many difficulties in life which I have not only never known, but which I am probably unable to imagine; and there are complications which are harder and more trying than difficulties; but is there any possible situation in which courage and resolution would not help me?"

He looked quickly back at her again, and perhaps it was a reflection of her smile that seemed to banish the shadow from his eyes. It was not easy, indeed, for eyes to be shadowed while they regarded anything so fearless and so beautiful as Miss Lorimer appeared at this moment—standing in the sunset glow of sea and sky, with its light on her face, her head uplifted with the proud self-confidence which characterized her, and her deep gray eyes full of radiance.

"No," he said, replying to her question, "there is certainly no situation in which courage and resolution

cannot help one. But you are right in thinking that there are complications worse than any dangers or obstacles—situations in which one is driven to hurting others or being untrue to one's self and one's highest conceptions of duty. Of course if one thought only of one's self, all would be very easy. There is a directness of aim, a singleness of purpose in selfishness that often settles such problems—brutally perhaps, but none the less effectually. But if one cannot put aside the thought of others—if one must admit their claim to consideration—one may find one's self in situations where courage is indeed possible, but not of much assistance."

Cecil did not answer for a moment. She stood looking at him, feeling as if his words had opened before her a vista of perplexity and complication altogether strange to her experience. She was trying to realize to herself the situation thus presented, when she perceived that Mr. Marriott and Grace were returning toward them, and she had only time to say, quickly :

"It seems to me that in such a case courage would be of great assistance. It would enable you to be true to your highest conception of duty, even at the cost of wounding others. And it must require a great deal of courage for *that*."

"A great deal indeed," he said, with a short sigh.

But he seemed to leave the weight of care of which he had thus been led to speak on the high, wind-swept hill, where the flag of England floats and the guns of England frown over the Atlantic surges, and to be in the best of spirits as they walked down through the steep, uneven streets, and, shaking the (literal) dust of Halifax from them, went on board their new ship.

When Cecil came up on deck next morning they were

well out at sea, and the coast of Nova Scotia was fading like a dream behind them. She seemed radiant with pleasure.

"How delightful it is to be at sea again!" she said when Tyrconnel met her. "There is such a glorious freshness about the ocean! I should not care if our voyage were going to last a month."

"Nor should I," he answered, with a very sincere accent. "So we, at least, will not regret the fact that this ship is by no means one of the greyhounds of the ocean. We shall be a week in reaching the other side."

"So much the better," she said. "We don't know what annoyances and disappointments may lie in wait there. We will enjoy the sea, and not think of the land we have left, or of that to which we are going."

The young man looked at her with a quick light in his eyes. "You are wise," he said. "This, then, is our world—for a week."

It was a week of pleasure to these two, at least. The weather was fine, except that once, when they neared ice—sailing indeed for twenty-four hours through the midst of great bergs—it grew intensely cold. But not even this breath of the frozen North could depress Cecil. Her vitality seemed proof against any lowering of the temperature. She enjoyed the icebergs as she enjoyed everything else, laughed at Grace's trepidation, went with the captain on the bridge to see the sun go down behind the great mountains of floating snow, and was the wonder of all the ladies, the admiration of all the men on board.

Admiration was an atmosphere to which she was well accustomed, however, and to which, as has been already

said, she did not object, unless it became too pronounced in character. Of that there was no danger at present. The man of whom she saw most was one in whom her confidence increased with her knowledge. And her interest in him—in his adventurous life (which yet had not marred his refinement), in his present troubles, and in his unfolding character—grew as the days went on. It was an interest fully shared by Grace Marriott. Indeed, with the latter it took the form of vivid curiosity. As they sat on deck together, she led the conversations in directions likely to afford as much information with regard to him as possible. But, although he was ready to talk, and did talk most entertainingly of the different parts of the world in which he had been—and he seemed to have been almost everywhere—there was a striking lack of the personal element in his narratives and reminiscences. He had been in the Southern Hemisphere for several years, but was now recalled to Ireland by family affairs which demanded his presence at home. So much she learned, but no more. Reticence was either a strongly marked characteristic or a carefully cultivated habit with him ; and the temptation to talk of himself, to which most people to readily yield, was apparently no temptation to him at all.

The monotony of days at sea is apt to make them pass rapidly if they are at all pleasant, and it seemed to Cecil that the evening came very soon when they were told that they would make Fastnet Light by daybreak. In the general expression of satisfaction, her silence was probably unobserved ; and she did not express her sentiments until Tyrconnel found her after dinner standing near the wheel-house, watching the long track of foam

in the vessel's wake as it stretched away to the horizon. The sun had gone down, but the lengthening twilight still held the world in a soft spell of beauty, while the moon hung in mid-heaven waiting for the hour of her empire. As Tyrconnel approached, she turned her head and smiled.

"I am enjoying all that I possibly can of our last evening at sea," she said. "To-morrow we shall be in sight of land, and it will no longer seem like the ocean."

"Yes, our voyage is nearly ended," said Tyrconnel. He, too, leaned against the rail, and looked westward along the ship's broad pathway. Perhaps he was thinking of the days and hours he had spent on that track—so soon, so utterly to be effaced, and which no human eye would ever find again in the wide waste of tossing water. He was silent so long that Cecil finally glanced at him. Then she saw that the shadow which had been for a time lifted had fallen again over his face, and that he looked like the man she had first met, not like her companion of the last eight days.

"'Everything that ends is short,'" she quoted, softly; "and pleasant things shortest of all. In spite of the iceberg, our voyage has been very pleasant to me, and I am sorry that it is over."

If she meant to rouse him from his abstraction, she succeeded. He turned and looked at her, but the shadow was still in his eyes as they rested on her face.

"Do you remember," he said, "the evening on the other ship, when we were standing like this watching the sunset, and you said that you wondered why people were so anxious to reach the shore, where all their cares lay in wait for them—why they were not more glad of

the brief respite of being at sea? After that I made a resolution to throw *my* cares aside, and enjoy the voyage as if it were not to end. Thanks to your suggestion—thanks to you in every sense—I have done so. But now the end has come, and, looking back, I have been trying to balance the good and ill. Was the pleasure worth the end? Will the memory of it be recompense for knowing that it is over? These are the questions I have been asking myself."

"One might ask such questions of every pleasure and every respite from care," said Cecil. "One must be sorry when a pleasant thing is over; but, notwithstanding the regret, it is good for us to have had the pleasure. It will be good for you to have laid your cares aside, even though you must take them up again."

"If the cares were all!" he said, speaking as if to himself. Then he went on quickly: "I do not know how to thank you for the kindness which has made this voyage all that it has been to me. I was just thinking that it is like that track of foam across the ocean—a pathway which I shall never find again, but which will remain always in my memory as luminous and as enchanted as it looks now."

Cecil's heart began to beat a little faster. After all, had her confidence been misplaced, and was the inevitable end of admiration and homage at hand? She glanced at him quickly, almost apprehensively, but the sadness of his face reassured her. He had looked away from her again, and was watching the track of foam as it was lost to sight in the far, golden distance.

"I hope that you will also remember your own kindness," she said. "If acknowledgments are to be made, they should not be all on your side. We owe much

to you. I shall never forget that night of the collision."

"Nor I. But I did nothing."

"You had the will to do much. I recognized that, and was grateful. If I am ever shipwrecked, I shall hope that you may be among the ship's company."

He smiled, as she meant that he should.

"If you are ever to be shipwrecked, I could ask nothing better than to be with you," he said. "But I fear that there is no such fortune in store for me. We talk often of the world being a small place, but it is large enough to admit of many different paths, which never cross. The people whom we wish to meet are those whom we do not meet. I have a presentiment that we shall never meet again after we part to-morrow."

Cecil did not answer for a moment. In fact, she was startled by her own sensations of regret, and by a burning inclination to say, "It will be your own fault if we do not meet again. A man can do what he pleases." But her favorite doctrine of the power of resolution to overcome all difficulties could plainly not be preached in this case. Besides, it suddenly occurred to her how little she knew of this man, of his circumstances or position, of the nature of the troubles that so evidently weighed upon him. To express a desire that they should meet again was, therefore, impossible. After a short pause she said, lightly :

"I have no faith in presentiments. I am sure that when I make my journey around the world, we shall meet somewhere—on shipboard very likely, where we can stand and watch another track of foam just like this. Meanwhile shall we go and look for Grace ?"

* * * * *

The next afternoon it was a rather sad trio that stood on the deck of the ship as she lay in Queenstown harbor, and watched the small tug which carried their friend ashore. Even Mr. Marriott was depressed.

"I have made many pleasant travelling acquaintances," he observed, "but never one whom I liked so much. I hope that I shall come across him again some day."

"He was delightful," said Grace, regretfully. "How we shall miss him! The ship seems absolutely empty now that he is gone. But we shall certainly meet him again some day; don't you think so, Cecil?"

Cecil fluttered her handkerchief in answer to a farewell signal from the pier, which the tug had by this time reached, and then answered Grace by one clear, decisive word—

"No."

CHAPTER VI.

"I ACTED ON A CAPRICE."

IN all the world there is nothing brighter than a spring day in Paris, when the gay city seems thrilling with life, when the flowery foliage is at its freshest, when the fountains are flashing diamond spray in the sunshine, when the streets and shady avenues are thronged with people, and the whole air is filled with sounds of life and pleasure-making.

On such a day Madame la Vicomtesse de Vérac sat in her salon, through the open windows of which came a soft murmur suggestive of the overflowing life of the great city. She had evidently been a beauty once, this faded, elegant woman; and she was still beautiful enough to charm the gaze that rested on her. All the fine grace of feature, the soft fairness of complexion, and the gentle brightness of large brown eyes remained, notwithstanding the touch of time—which was sufficiently perceptible. But it was a tender touch, as if passing lightly over a thing so delicate and lovely. Roses had vanished from the cheeks, but their smoothness knew no lines such as care and trouble write. Indeed these foes of the human race had scarcely touched this graceful head. "Adela will make a great success in the world," a wise woman once said in her girlhood. "She will never suffer through others, for she has not heart enough; and she has so much beauty and shrewd-

ness that she will do the best for herself always, in a practical point of view."

Never was prophecy more completely fulfilled. People passed like shadows across the life of this woman, outwardly so charming, inwardly so selfish. If they could be of use to her, she laid hold upon and used them ; if not, she let them go with gentle indifference. Only in relation to her interests had they reality or value in her eyes. She shed a few decorous tears when her first husband died, but she had the consciousness of having fulfilled her duties toward him to his entire satisfaction ; and he fulfilled *his*, in leaving her rich as well as free. Her second marriage opened to her a new world, in which she proceeded at once to conquer her place ; and by the time that she was left a second time a widow, she had achieved a social success which rendered her independent of further assistance. There was nothing, therefore, to tempt her to a third venture into the uncertain waters of matrimony. Offers were not lacking, but she declined them all—preferring to enjoy her freedom and the social distinction she had won, without encountering fresh risks.

But, though she refused to marry, the Vicomtesse did not deny herself the admiration and homage of men. This was an incense which had never failed her at any time of her life, and which was as necessary now as ever. Clever men she specially liked, and when she wanted a friend or an adviser, it was to such a man that she always turned. One who had no doubt of his own cleverness, and whose estimate of himself the world was prepared to endorse, sat before her now, listening with an attentive air while she talked. More distinguished-looking than handsome, he was yet not deficient in

good looks; his keen face was at once intellectual and attractive, while his air, his manner, every detail of his toilet, indicated the man of the world, familiar with the highest phases of civilization. This was Mr. Philip Craven, the friend of Jack Bernard.

"And why," he was saying, "do you begin now to distrust your wisdom? You must have had a good reason for taking such a step."

"Ah! who can tell?" she answered. "Who knows what are good reasons? Mine, I confess, are very like caprices. I chanced to see a photograph of this girl, and she has a striking face. A desire grew upon me to see the original. And, then, I have felt for some time that I need a companion—a girl, pretty, well-bred, in whom I could interest myself, who might make a social success, and whom I might marry well. You will laugh, perhaps, but that is a fancy which pleased me."

"I do not laugh," replied Craven. "I find your fancy very natural and charming. I am sure you have acted wisely."

"I am not at all sure of it," said the Vicomtesse, with a sigh. "But I acted on a caprice, and I must abide by the consequences. If she should not be presentable, I will leave Paris, go to some quiet place in the country, and send her home after a month or two with an abundance of *chiffons*. But as the time approaches for her arrival, I begin to wish that I had never seen her photograph. The uncertainty of what she may be, the fear that I have brought a dreadful infliction upon myself, makes me very nervous. I had hardly written when I began to hope that she would decline to come. But no: she wrote that she would sail from New York almost immediately."

"Courage!" said her companion, who could not forbear a smile at the melancholy tone of the last announcement. "Believe that you have summoned a companion who will prove all that you could desire."

"You speak as if you knew something of her," said the Vicomtesse, with a look of surprise. "Yet I have not even told you her name."

"I can tell it to you, however. She is Miss Lorimer."

"But what does this mean? Do you know her?"

"Not at all. But I know her brother-in-law, who is one of my oldest friends. On my arrival in Paris I found a letter from him speaking of this young lady, and saying that she would soon be with the Vicomtesse de Vérac. Now, Bernard is not only the best of fellows, but he is incapable of making a serious mistake about another person; and, from the tone in which he discourses of Miss Lorimer, it is evident that she must possess unusual claims to distinction of one kind or another—though he does not specify what they are."

"Indeed!" said Madame de Vérac, with an air of interest. "She is very handsome—no doubt she is what they call in America a belle. It is a vulgar form of social success, but the only one of which they know anything. It means only the admiration and attention of men, and is more likely to spoil than to improve a girl. It lowers her tone, and makes her unfit for what is meant by social success here."

"Bernard says that she is a little spoiled and wilful, but intimates that this is owing to her having had the world pretty much at her feet. I inferred that she might be an heiress as well as a beauty."

"Oh, no," replied the Vicomtesse, confidently. "I do not suppose that she has anything extraordinary in

the way of fortune. It is not essential to success in America, you know ; though, of course, it is a desirable gilding to other charms, there as elsewhere."

"Then why should Bernard emphasize his fears of matrimonial snares for her ? He must know that wealth is absolutely essential to enable an American to marry well over here."

"I doubt if he knows it. These things are little understood in America. And so he fears matrimonial snares for her ? What absurdity ! Should she have a good *dot*, I may be able to arrange a marriage for her, if she wishes it, and if she does not hope for too much ; but to fancy that snares would be spread—ah, the folly of the provincial imagination !"

"You cannot tell," said Craven, with a smile, "what elements for success this young lady may possess. Who knows ? You may have the pleasure of presenting another Madame de Vérac to Paris."

To his surprise the Vicomtesse lifted herself and looked at him with almost indignant reproach.

"I did not think the suggestion of such an idea would come from *you !*" she said. "Do you imagine that I could desire the last De Vérac to make no higher alliance than that ?"

Even to one who thought he knew the speaker well, this was a little startling. Craven was aware that, like most Americans who have married rank in Europe, Madame de Vérac was an aristocrat of aristocrats ; but he hardly expected her to scornfully repudiate the idea of an alliance between one of her own family and the representative of the name she had taken in marriage. He had yet to learn that the ties of blood were in her case weak compared to those she had formed from as-

sociation, and that had she been born De Vérac she could not have felt more pride in the name—a greater wish that it should obtain every possible prestige.

"I must beg pardon for having expressed myself obscurely," he said, after an instant's pause. "I did not mean literally another Madame de Vérac, but simply one who might prove worthy of emulating your success."

"It is I who should beg pardon for stupidity, then," returned the Vicomtesse. "I misunderstood you the more readily because it has occurred to me that I might be suspected of some such intention. But any one who knows me must know how near to my heart it is that Armand should make a great marriage. He is the head of the house, he is in the flower of his youth—handsome, *distingué*, clever. He can aspire to any one, and he must, he will, make a great alliance."

Mr. Craven lifted his brows a little. "There is but one drawback," he said. "The Comte de Vérac is most charming; but if he is not already ruined in fortune, he is considered to be one of those who are on the high-road to that end."

"Ah! what will you?" said the Vicomtesse, with an expressive Gallic gesture. "His tastes are those of his rank and age. Presently he will *range* himself, and all trouble will be over. One must not press the point too soon. My opinion is respected in the family," she added, with a slight smile, "because the assurance that he will inherit my fortune renders him a *bon parti*, let his extravagance be what it will."

Her companion regarded her for the second time with an expression of genuine surprise; then in a tone of deference, though with the freedom of an old friend, he said: "But, Madame, pardon me if I remind you that

in giving such an assurance you overlook not only your own relatives, but the probability that one so young and beautiful as yourself may yet desire to form other ties."

"My own relatives are nothing to me," she answered. "I have lost sight of them altogether, and, as far as I am aware, they are all well provided for; while Armand de Vérac is the head of the family with which I am identified by marriage. My own comparative youth and beauty are beside the question. I shall never marry again—if that is what you mean."

"I fear that I am a selfish wretch. I rejoice to hear you say so, because in such a case I feel that you would belong more to one and less to all of your friends."

"I am surprised that you could entertain such an idea," she said. "What have I to gain by marriage? I have all that I ask of life, and a change could only be to risk unknown dangers. I shall never think of it."

"What can one do but bow to such a decision?" said Craven, smiling. "To be your friend is almost enough to reconcile one to the hopelessness of ever becoming your husband."

"Perhaps if I were twenty years younger, it might not be altogether hopeless for you," said the Vicomtesse, with a caressing smile. "But, happily for both of us, there can be no such commonplace ending to our pleasant friendship. Now go and meditate gratefully on that."

If Mr. Craven was meditating on the fact thus presented to his consideration, when he emerged from the great *porte-cochère* of the hotel in which the Vicomtesse had her abode, it certainly brought a smile of amusement to his lips; but a smile which the lady whom he

left could hardly have resented, so slight yet so humorous was it. In truth, he was smiling at himself as much as at her ; for his fancy was greatly amused by the position of sentimental friend and confidential adviser which he occupied. It was not in the least an onerous position, for the Vicomtesse was too wise to be exacting ; and although any civilized man must have felt bound to burn a little incense before the shrine of so fair a goddess, the more delicately this was done the better the goddess was pleased. Such an offering was a small price to pay for the friendship of a woman so beautiful, so charming, so *spirituelle ;* and Craven, who admired her most sincerely, had no difficulty in rendering the homage demanded of him.

Just now, however, he had other matter for thought and amusement. "By Jove," he said to himself, "if Bernard could only know ! What is it he says ?" He paused as he spoke, drew a letter from his pocket, opened it, turned over the pages until he found this passage :

"What do you think of being invested with discretionary powers as guardian of a young lady ? Don't be too much startled ! This as it stands is, of course, only a jest ; but I really want you to be good enough (provided that you are in Paris, or likely to be there) to look a little after my sister-in-law, Miss Lorimer, who will be there in a few weeks from this date. She goes to visit her cousin, the Vicomtesse de Vérac, of whom you may or may not know something. On this side of the water very little is known of her, and that little is not altogether of a complimentary nature ; so that it is decidedly against my wishes and advice that Cecil goes. But 'a wilful woman'—you know the rest of the prov-

erb. Now, you will agree with me that it is a risk for any girl to place herself under the social wing of a woman of whom she knows little beyond the name ; but this risk is particularly serious in Cecil's case. It would be a great misfortune for her to be placed even temporarily in a false position of any kind ; and indeed the mere possibility of such a thing makes her friends so uneasy that I have thought of the expedient of invoking your aid, and begging you to watch over her—as a guardian under the rose. Though you may be dismayed at such a prospect, you will not feel it an unpleasant responsibility. It would be difficult to find a more attractive person than Miss Lorimer ; and if you were not proof against feminine fascinations, I might fear that I was not doing you a good turn in imposing this charge upon you. That you will require all your tact in fulfilling it, I cannot conceal from you ; for although she is uncommonly reasonable for a woman, she is also self-willed and imperious to a great degree. I have said nothing to her of the charge that I give you, but she knows our friendship, and will be prepared to receive you cordially. Whatever happens, do not let her fall into any matrimonial snare. I speak of this danger because it is the one she would most scornfully repudiate, and therefore the one most likely to occur. The Vicomtesse de Vérac sold herself for a title, and would probably not object to assisting or promoting another transaction of the same order. By the bye, if you know anything of her, pray report what manner of woman she is."

More the letter contained, but at the above point Craven's gravity gave way. The smile with which he began to read had been gradually deepening, until now

he laughed outright. The absurdity of the situation appealed to his sense of humor with irresistible force. The doubts and forebodings of the Vicomtesse, which were still ringing in his ears, and the grave anxiety apparent in every line of Bernard's letter, struck him as the elements of a comedy revealed for his special amusement.

"Now, what will Mademoiselle the Heroine be?" he thought, replacing the letter in its envelope. "Jack writes of her as if she were a royal princess. I like the fellow's impudence in talking of danger for *me* in the attractions of a spoiled American belle! But what would Madame la Vicomtesse think if she could know that she is seriously distrusted as not worthy of the chaperonage she has undertaken? Ah! what would any of us think if we but knew the whole with regard to anything in this overwhelmingly droll world?"

CHAPTER VII.

"SOME CHARGES PROVE RATHER DIFFICULT."

"WELL," said Craven, smiling, "what is she like?" The Vicomtesse lifted her hands and looked at him with a comical expression of surprise. It was her evening of reception, and, by appearing early, he found her alone. She was more of a picture than ever in her exquisite toilet, and the beautiful room made a harmonious background, with its soft tints and tranquil, flower-perfumed atmosphere.

"She is like—what shall I say?" she replied. "Fancy the Venus de Milo with arms and a modern dress—that is what she is like more than anything else I can conceive."

"She must be very beautiful."

"She is strikingly beautiful. But you will see her and judge for yourself."

"And your fears are all dissipated, your doubts all relieved?"

"Completely. She is not only handsome, but she has the air of one who has always commanded social homage. That is something which cannot be affected, or learned in a day."

"It is not remarkable in her case. There is probably no creature in the world so accustomed to homage as an American beauty and belle."

"I suppose not. It has been so long since I was an American beauty and belle that I have nearly forgotten what was incident to the position."

Craven paid the compliment which was expected of him here, and then asked if he might hope to have the pleasure of seeing Miss Lorimer.

"Oh, yes," the Vicomtesse answered. "She has promised to appear—ah, *voilà !*"

She looked toward the door communicating with another apartment as she spoke, and Craven turned in that direction. Between the rich folds of the curtains stood a figure that made an instantaneous impression of dignity and grace on his mind. Madame de Vérac's comparison of the Venus de Milo had caused him to smile when she uttered it, but now he recognized that there was something suggestive of the noble lines of antique beauty in the face and form before him. It was only for an instant that Cecil paused, like a picture in a frame : the next moment she advanced, and he saw a tall, beautiful girl, whose pale, clear-cut face seemed to him the frankest and noblest countenance he had ever looked on.

"You come in good time, my dear," observed the Vicomtesse. "Here is Mr. Craven, who is anxious to meet you."

"If you have not heard Jack Bernard speak of me often, Miss Lorimer, I shall think he is a faithless friend," said Craven, as he stepped forward.

Cecil looked at him for an instant with her clear eyes before she answered—a short space of time, yet long enough to make Craven feel as if he had been weighed and measured. Then she smiled as she extended her hand.

"I have often heard Jack speak of you, Mr. Craven,"

she replied ; "and I warn you that if you are able to justify all that he has said, you must be a very remarkable person indeed."

"Has he been even more complimentary than I dared to expect?" asked Craven. "Diffidence is not my fault. I feel within myself a capability for justifying any moderately good opinion."

"Jack is a very enthusiastic friend," answered Miss Lorimer ; "but I have no doubt of your capability to justify his opinion."

Craven bowed. "I hope that I shall be fortunate enough to justify yours," he said ; and as they sat down, while Madame de Vérac turned to greet other guests, he added : "I have just congratulated the Vicomtesse on your arrival, and I must now congratulate you. Every one has heard of the accident to your ship. It was a wonderful escape for all concerned."

"I think we all feel it so," she answered. "The ship was greatly shattered by the collision, and but for her water-tight compartments would have been lost."

"It must have been a terrible shock when you came in contact with the ice."

"It was terrible." She paused for a moment as if to recall it, while the beautiful drawing-room seemed to fade away, and she saw before her again the long saloon of the ship, the pale, excited faces, the vision of death which had appeared so near, and Tyrconnel's dark, grave eyes.

"A shock to the strongest nerves, I should think," Craven went on. "Did it not make you apprehensive for the rest of the voyage?"

She shook her head. "I was not apprehensive at all, although we saw much more ice. Nothing is more true

than that a coward dies a hundred deaths. Now, I cannot see the good of dying more than once."

"You are very sensible as well as very brave," said Craven, smiling; "but most people—most women especially—cannot control their fears."

"I think I am brave by nature," she said, carelessly, "and therefore I deserve little credit for it. Jack always prophesies that I shall some day run into great danger, because, as he puts it, I have 'every sense but the sense of fear.'"

"I hardly know whether to call that a commendation or the reverse."

"There is no doubt Jack meant it for the reverse. By the bye, he seemed quite certain that I should see you soon; for his last words to me were, 'Tell Craven to remember my charge.'"

"He knows my weakness for this gay capital, and he wrote to me not long ago, giving me a charge which I shall take great pleasure in fulfilling."

She glanced at him with a look half inquisitive, half amused.

"Some charges prove rather difficult," she said.

"But some difficulties are animating," replied Craven.

"That is my favorite maxim," she said, with a laugh. "Well, I have discovered that you are self-satisfied and courageous. What phase of character do you mean to show me next?"

"If you permit me to say so, that of appreciation."

"Of *me?* Ah! that is absurd. Do you fancy I do not know the portrait Jack has drawn of me, the dark colors in which he has painted my character, branding it as 'incorrigible and wilful'?"

"Jack betrayed himself, then? Yet the scamp told me—"

He paused abruptly, for the amusement with which Miss Lorimer laughed again told him that he had rather betrayed Jack.

"I knew it!" she exclaimed. "I felt sure he had written in that manner. But why? How could he fancy that my character would interest you?"

"You have surprised me into betraying part of Jack's confidence, Miss Lorimer; do you not think I should respect the remainder? I am at liberty to say only that he thought I might guard you against a few pitfalls, and he conferred on me the rank of your guardian."

"I believe it is an accepted law, Mr. Craven, that one must have authority one's self in order to confer it on another. I do not therefore clearly see how Jack could confer on you powers which he does not himself possess."

"It is not a question of powers, but only of privilege. My rights, if you allow me any, extend only to counsel."

"I am not aware that I am in need of counsel."

"But you know the proverb that 'two heads are better than one, even though one be a blockhead.' Now, I am not quite a blockhead, and I should be more gratified than I can say if you would promise to call upon me for counsel should any need for it arise. You are in a foreign country, and it is not impossible that such a need might arise. It was to provide for it that Jack called upon my old and sincere friendship."

He had dropped his tone of light banter, and spoke so earnestly that Cecil was pleased.

'Jesting apart, I am sure that you are very kind," she said. "But you forget that I have my cousin to call upon in such an emergency."

"The Vicomtesse," said Craven, "is everything that is most charming; but she is *plus royaliste que le roi.* In other words, she has lived abroad so long that she is steeped in foreign ideas, and might look at things very differently from yourself."

Cecil smiled. "We are discussing a very improbable event," she said. "If Jack told you anything of me, he might have told you that I am generally my own counsellor."

"It was not necessary for Jack to tell me that," said Craven; "your face assures me of it. Alas!" he added quickly, in a different tone, "the Vicomtesse does not mean me to monopolize you longer. Here she comes with De Vérac. Have you met him?"

Cecil had only time to answer in the negative when the Vicomtesse approached them on the arm of a young man, whom she presented to Cecil as "My nephew, the Comte de Vérac."

Cecil's intuition was too quick for her to give a merely surface-reading to the pride which filled the words "My nephew;" and as she glanced at the bearer of the title, she thought kindly that pride was permissible in claiming connection with one in whom grace and distinction were so happily blended. Instead of the small, dark Frenchman with whom one is familiar, she saw a tall, blonde gentleman, with manners of quiet repose, who looked at her with evident admiration, but not the least trace of gallantry.

"I hope, Mademoiselle, that you have quite recovered from the fatigue and perils of your long journey," he

said in English, without a trace of foreign accent; "and, since first impressions are strong, that France has pleased you."

"Does France ever fail to please?" asked Cecil, with her brilliant smile. "At least"—with a glance around her—"it certainly could not fail to please me."

"At this season Paris is very charming," said the young man; "and if you do not enjoy it, you will be unlike the majority of your fair compatriots. They are generally devoted to Paris, and Paris returns the compliment by finding them charming."

"Paris certainly exerts a fascination which has become proverbial in America," answered Cecil. "My friends were afraid for me to be exposed to it; they feared I might never return to them."

"A number of your countrywomen have been persuaded to remain with us," said M. de Vérac, smiling.

Miss Lorimer colored quickly. She had forgotten for a moment in what particular manner her sister had feared she might not return, and she was vexed with herself for alluding to such a possibility.

"Their fears were very unfounded," she said, with a little *hauteur*. "There is not the least danger of my remaining. I only meant to illustrate how proverbial the fascination of Paris has become in America."

"I hope that you will see something of France outside of Paris," said the young Count. "There is much in the provinces that I think would interest you. Foreigners are too apt to believe that Paris is France. There could be no greater mistake."

"I am very sure that provincial France will interest me most of the two," said Cecil. "For there, surely,

some remnants still exist of old royal France. That is what I care for, and wish most to see."

"Then I must persuade my aunt to bring you down to my old *château*. It is an interesting relic of the past; for, by a series of fortunate circumstances, it escaped destruction in the Revolution, and remains almost untouched as it was previous to 1789."

"Oh, I should like that very much!" said Cecil quickly.

"In that case it must certainly be done," said De Vérac. "I think I can answer for my aunt, who likes the *château*—for a time—at the right season. You must prepare yourself for a great deal of antiquity. Since the Revolution the family finances have not admitted of much restoration."

"Which is often another name for demolition. I am glad they have not admitted of that."

The young man shrugged his shoulders, laughing slightly. "I cannot say that I am exactly glad of it," he observed. "But the result is at least interesting."

"I am sure that it will interest me," said Cecil frankly.

And indeed, as their conversation proceeded, she found M. de Vérac himself interesting. A man of the world, with the grace of its highest society, he had also a well-cultivated mind and a charm of manner quite irresistible. It was impossible not to like him; and Cecil had already conceived quite a cordial and friendly feeling for him, when the Vicomtesse interrupted their conversation by summoning her to be presented to a very great lady. The interruption was so gracefully made that it did not occur to Miss Lorimer until some time later that it had been done with a purpose.

It was not until after the guests had departed that Madame de Vérac's reason for ending the conversation between her nephew and Cecil began to dawn upon the mind of the latter.

"You are not tired, my dear, are you?" said the Vicomtesse caressingly, when they were finally left alone. "I want to tell you how much I am charmed with your success this evening. It is a great pleasure to me to introduce to my world one whom the most critical must admire."

"You are too good," said Cecil, who saw that these words were spoken with perfect sincerity, and were indeed the overflowing of the Vicomtesse's great satisfaction. "I am very glad to do you credit," she added, with a laugh. "It was something of a risk to invite an unknown cousin to Paris. You must have been a trifle nervous over the result."

"My dear," replied Madame de Vérac, so relieved that entire frankness was possible, "to tell you the truth, I was miserable. I knew you were handsome from your photograph, but manner is so much more than looks! How could I tell what you would be?"

"I felt sure you were frightened at your own rashness," said Cecil. "In your place I could not have been so courageous. But now let me say how much I am pleased with your friends. They are altogether delightful."

"*Cela va sans dire.* I know only the best people. Few have been more successful, I think, than myself in forming a most desirable circle. But tell me what you think of Armand."

"M. de Vérac? I find him very charming, and do not

wonder that you call him your nephew with an air of pride."

"He is more like a son than a nephew to me," said Madame de Vérac, in a tone of genuine feeling; "and I am devoted to him. But, like other men, he can be very provoking sometimes."

A short pause followed. Cecil neither felt bound to ask nor curious to know how M. de Vérac was provoking; but presently the Vicomtesse continued:

"Now that you have seen Armand, you can imagine that there is nothing so near my heart as his success in life. He is very talented, and has lately entered politics. Belonging to the Royalist party, he has little to hope for at present, but works for the day of reaction, which he and others believe certain to come. Meanwhile his friends desire to see him strengthen himself by a suitable alliance—you know that in France, in a certain rank of life, all marriages are arranged for the mutual advantage of the parties concerned."

"Yes," Cecil replied, she was aware of it. "I have read a few French novels," she added, with a smile.

"It is a very wise custom," said Madame de Vérac. "Well, an opportunity for an alliance of this kind is presented to Armand, with only one disadvantage on his side. He has rank, social prestige, and talents, but he lacks fortune. His father was a notorious *viveur*, who impoverished the family estates; and Armand himself led a life of gay extravagance for several years. Consequently there is this drawback to his presenting himself as a suitor to the lady in question, who is a daughter of the Duc de Mirécourt."

"Indeed!" said Cecil, with polite attention. "But

is fortune always essential? I fancied that rank, social prestige, talent, would atone for the lack of wealth."

"It would atone for it in ordinary cases, and more than atone for it if he were thinking of marrying beneath his rank. But in Mademoiselle de Mirécourt's suitor exceptional advantages are demanded."

"What then?" asked Cecil, beginning to be amused. "Will he resign hope since he has not the necessary fortune?"

"*He* is inclined to do so, but I am opposed to such an idea. The alliance would be so suitable in every way that I have set my heart upon it, and if he would listen to me—" She paused a moment, then said quickly: "I desire to assure him of the absolute inheritance of my fortune. That, united to his own, would make him an eligible *parti*."

"You are very generous," said Cecil. Surprise was her first feeling, her next was an almost overpowering inclination to laugh; for it occurred to her that Madame de Vérac was offering her a timely warning against any hopes of such inheritance for herself. "M. de Vérac must have been very much gratified to find his difficulty so smoothed away," she added after a moment.

"He will not consent to accept the assurance," said Madame de Vérac, in a tone of irritation. "I have urged, I have pleaded, but he is like steel; I cannot make him bend."

"Perhaps he is not anxious for the marriage," hazarded Cecil. "It seems to me that he might object to an arrangement of the kind. A woman must submit, I presume; but a man—"

"My dear," said the Vicomtesse, majestically, "you don't at all understand. Armand is thoroughly con-

servative in all his tastes and opinions—an aristocrat of aristocrats. He desires the alliance very much, and it would be so suitable in all respects that I hope he will yet hear reason with regard to it."

"For your sake, I hope so," said Miss Lorimer. "But I approve him for declining your offer. He must be an interesting person."

This remark was uttered so carelessly, with so much of the princess-like air and tone which was characteristic but quite unconscious on the part of Cecil, that her cousin was for an instant uncertain whether to be amused or offended. What was to be thought of a girl who condescendingly remarked that she "approved of" the Comte de Vérac?

Nothing more was said on the subject, but before Miss Lorimer retired to her pillow, she wrote a long letter to her sister, and this was one passage in it:

"Now that I have described Madame de Vérac, I hope that you and Jack will set your dear, solemn heads and hearts at rest about any matrimonial intrigues on her part with regard to myself. In the first place, she has no suspicion that I am matrimonially desirable; and in the second place, all her attention in that line is bestowed at present on her nephew (by marriage). She has already given me two items of information which have very much amused me, because her intention in giving them was so obvious. One is that the inheritance of her fortune is absolutely assured to this young Comte de Vérac; the other, that he is 'an aristocrat of aristocrats,' who desires an alliance with the daughter of the Duc de Mirécourt. It seems, however, that a slight obstacle in the way of this alliance is the fact that he has squandered a large part of his fortune. So

the Vicomtesse comes forward and desires to throw hers into the scale, to facilitate his ambition and make the Duke's daughter possible. This is very kind of her —or would be if one could overlook the fact that the generosity really costs her nothing, and is attended by much *éclat*. I feel shabby in writing this ; but, charming as Madame de Vérac is, I see already the cloven foot of adoration for rank peeping out in more than one respect. Can any one live as she does and avoid the contagion, I wonder ? With her, I fancy, it is held in check by good taste ; but I am sure she would consider the De Mirécourt alliance cheaply purchased at the cost of pledging her fortune—after she can no longer enjoy it. You may imagine how much I was amused by her warning *me* not to hope for any share of this fortune, and not to set my ambitious thoughts upon the nephew, whom, I suppose, I must soon see quite often. Oh, what comedy there is in life ! I think I am really going to enjoy my visit very much."

CHAPTER VIII.

'I FIND HER ADORABLE."

CERTAINLY if Miss Lorimer's prophecy was not fulfilled, it was not the fault of the Vicomtesse. Delighted to find her young relative so presentable, Madame de Vérac spared no effort in securing her success in the world in which she had made good her own place. It was a pleasure to show the exclusive circle which had received her that the stem from which she herself had bloomed was capable of producing other flowers as fine. "You have in you all the material of a *grande dame*, my dear," she said one day to Cecil. "You ought to make a great alliance; but, unfortunately, money—a good deal of money—is necessary for that."

"Oh, my prophetic soul!" thought Cecil, with a smile. Aloud she said: "I should not care for an alliance that had to be made by money; so do not regret that the *grande dame* in me is not likely to come to light. After all, I am not sure that it exists."

"*I* am sure," said the Vicomtesse. "But you have the romantic ideas of your country—or at least what are supposed to be the ideas of your country. I find, however, that most Americans are quite ready to lay them aside when they come over here—provided they have money enough."

A quick answer—an answer which would have be-

trayed her—trembled on Cecil's lips, but she restrained it, and only said : "I am afraid I must bear the odium of being romantic, for I should not like money to be a factor in my marriage—if I ever marry. But I think that doubtful."

Madame de Vérac shook her head. "It is doubtful, if you are too romantic," she said.

But she dropped the subject there ; for, dearly as she would have liked to arrange a grand marriage for this beautiful, stately creature, she knew the ways of her adopted country too well to think of it for a moment as possible. Had she been aware of Cecil's fortune, nothing could have withheld her from match-making schemes ; and perceiving this, the young lady felicitated herself on the forethought which had caused her to maintain silence on this point.

"I should be as much tormented with suitors as Miss Percival in 'L'Abbé Constantin,'" she said to herself. "The Vicomtesse would give me no peace. Who knows? I might even be considered worthy to become Comtesse de Vérac."

For one so accustomed to admiration as Miss Lorimer could not fail to perceive that the young Comte admired her extremely. She was, in fact, charming to him, with her beauty, her cleverness, her unconsciously princess-like air. Like his aunt, he thought that she had in her the making of a *grande dame*. "What a pity," he thought, with an involuntary sigh, "that she has not one of the great American fortunes!" He did not add even to himself the unexpressed idea that was, nevertheless, in his mind, that in such a case he might resign with philosophy his pretensions to the hand of Mademoiselle de Mirécourt, and follow the example of his uncle.

But now, as ever, thoughts of marriage were little in Cecil's mind. She liked the social atmosphere in which she found herself—that charming atmosphere of high-bred French society into which foreigners seldom penetrate—its culture, its grace, its exquisite refinement; she expanded in it like a flower, adapting herself readily to manners which pleased her, and receiving on all sides fresh impressions.

One thing which struck her forcibly was the tone of unaffected piety which seemed to pervade the best of this society. Religious questions were discussed with as much interest as the last development in politics or discovery in science. And when Cecil, who had hitherto thought of religion as a thing belonging as little as possible to the intellectual world, heard it spoken of in its intellectual aspect, affecting the gravest social questions and influencing the politics of great nations, she felt as if she had wakened in another world. They interested her very much, these questions; she seemed to catch a glimpse in them of something greater, higher, nobler than she had ever known before; and she began to enlarge her knowledge of them with all the energy which characterized her.

It was not long before she discovered that she could not hope for much assistance in this direction from the Vicomtesse. Madame de Vérac had indeed entered the Catholic Church at the time of her second marriage, but religion was in no sense a vital force in her life. She attended Mass decorously, played her part in charitable affairs as befitted a great lady, and listened to the sermons of great preachers with apparent appreciation; but all this was, in a certain sense, a deference to the world—that portion of the world with which she

desired to identify herself—and had little interest for her in itself. Yet as far as she went she was sincere. She admired the Catholic Church, and believed all that it proposed for belief, without troubling herself to inquire into the grounds of that belief. To Cecil's questions, therefore, she returned but vague and unsatisfactory replies ; and observing this, Miss Lorimer soon ceased to ask information from her. But her interest in the subject did not cease. She went to the functions in the great churches with eyes and ears open to learn if possible their full meaning ; and the more she saw, the more deeply she was interested. Here was something which in greatness appealed to her love of greatness, while in majesty and poetry it fulfilled her highest ideal.

So the bright spring days—nowhere so bright as in Paris—passed. But none of the new friends surrounding Cecil banished from her memory the recollection of the man with whom she had crossed the ocean, and whose character had impressed her more deeply than she had imagined. Again and again she found herself wondering what life lay before him ; what difficult task, at which he had hinted, he went to meet with his resolute face and eyes. Grace Marriott, who had gone to Dresden with her brother, alluded to him frequently in her letters. "Do not fail to tell me if you ever meet or hear of Mr. Tyrconnel," she wrote. "I cannot believe that we have seen the last of him ; he interested me so much. I think that he even interested *you*, hard as it is to waken your interest for any member of the sterner sex."

Cecil smiled a little over this. Yes, she knew that it was hard to waken her interest, yet Tyrconnel had done

so without doubt ; and she began to think that there was a fair prospect that the young Comte de Vérac would do so likewise. He pleased her in many ways. His culture and polish were delightful, his talents were undeniable, and the charm of his character was very great. Frenchmen are usually admirable in their domestic relations, especially are they the best of sons ; and it was almost the relation of son which this young man bore to Madame de Vérac. His manners to her were always charming—a happy blending of affection, admiration, and deference, which Cecil decided was thoroughly sincere. On her own part she made, as she discovered later, one mistake : she showed her liking for him too frankly. A young Frenchman is not accustomed to this, and is very likely to misunderstand it. M. de Vérac did not misunderstand it vulgarly—did not fancy, as some of his countrymen would have done, that Miss Lorimer had lost her heart to him ; but he soon felt that it was quite within the limit of possible things that he might lose his own heart to the beautiful girl who treated him with such frank and gracious kindness.

He intimated as much one day to Craven, who treated the avowal rather cynically. "What is the good of talking in that manner?" he said. "You know that you could not marry an angel if she were not of suitable rank or had not a suitable *dot*. Miss Lorimer is all that you say, but she can be nothing to you."

"Nothing to me when I find her fascinating—adorable!" said the young Comte, with a smile. "How like your prosaic nation that is, my friend! Because I cannot marry this beautiful creature I am not to find her charming! How practical and how absurd!"

"It is much more absurd to pay her a sentimental

homage that means nothing," said Craven ; "and that might—mind, I don't say it would—but that might lead her to imagine what can never be. For no Frenchman, that I am aware of, ever makes a sentimental marriage ; and you certainly are not in a position to prove an exception to the rule."

De Vérac shook his head a little sadly. "No," he said frankly, "I am not. If I were, I would not answer for the result."

"Well," said Craven, a little irritably, "what I beg is that, considering this to be the case, you will not make your admiration quite so manifest to Miss Lorimer. Remember that she comes from a country where men *do* marry for love."

"And where divorce flourishes, I am told," returned the young Comte, a little maliciously. "Our French system has its disadvantages, but, from what I have heard, the average of unhappiness is not greater with us than in other countries."

"Your system is sensible enough and works well enough among yourselves," said Craven ; "but that has nothing to do with the fact that it is difficult for a foreigner to understand how entirely you are governed in such matters by prudential considerations. Therefore I repeat that your admiration is likely to be misunderstood by the person to whom it is freely shown."

"I should certainly not wish to be misunderstood by that person of all others," said De Vérac gravely. "Believe me I shall be careful to avoid the possibility of such misunderstanding."

"And I shall take care," said Craven to himself, "that there is no such possibility."

In pursuance of this resolution, the first time that he

found an opportunity to speak to Cecil alone he led the conversation to the young Comte, and mentioned incidentally the matrimonial arrangement into which it was likely he would soon enter. Having ventured upon the subject with some hesitation, he was very much reassured by Miss Lorimer's smile.

"For a conscientious guardian, you are late with your warning, Mr. Craven," she said. "But, fortunately for my peace of mind, Madame de Vérac anticipated you. Immediately after my first meeting with her nephew she told me that negotiations were on foot for his marriage to the daughter of the Duc de Mirécourt. This was to let me know that I must not set my heart or hopes on *him*. Then she added that she had pledged her fortune to secure the alliance, which was to warn me not to build any expectations on *that*. So you see I was fully informed of the situation."

"The warnings must have seemed very absurd to you," said Craven, struck by a sense of the folly of his own fears; "but Madame de Vérac's motives were good. She thought you might be like—others."

"Oh! I never blamed her," answered Cecil, with a laugh. "I did full justice to her motives. But that the warnings seemed very absurd to me, I admit. No doubt I have always had an exaggerated idea of my own importance. It was well to come abroad in order to find out that I am, after all, like—others."

Craven shook his head. "You could never find that out," he said. "One has only to know you to discover how very much you are unlike others. But until one knows you mistakes are possible."

"Mistakes are always possible," she replied. "So Madame de Vérac's clear statement of the situation

relieved even while it amused me. Understanding how things are, I can act more freely than if I feared misapprehension."

"Are you quite sure that even now there is no danger of that?" asked Craven significantly.

She looked at him with surprise. "What danger could there possibly be?" she asked. Then, as he hesitated, "Speak frankly," she said. "What is the good of the *rôle* you have undertaken if you do not fulfil it?"

"Frankly, then: you like the Comte de Vérac, do you not?"

"Very much. He pleases and interests me. What then?"

"Only this, that I fear he may misunderstand your interest; and I am sure that you do not wish to inspire a hopeless *grande passion*."

"There is nothing I desire less," she said, with the calmness of one to whom such a thing was by no means new; "but I do not think that there exists the remotest danger of it. M. de Vérac is no more likely to conceive a *grande passion* for me than I am to find him dangerously fascinating, or to dream of becoming Madame la Comtesse. So pray set your mind at rest."

"It is at rest so far as you are concerned," continued Craven, smiling; "but I am by no means sure of De Vérac. He is of inflammable material, although, like all his countrymen, when it comes to marriage he will be guided by considerations of *convenance* alone."

"Then," said Cecil, with delicate scorn, "there is no need to fear for inflammable material which can be held in such admirable control. But this is a matter which concerns himself alone. In all that concerns me

I find him exceedingly agreeable and interesting. He is anxious for Madame de Vérac to take me on a visit to his *château*, and I am sure that I shall like it very much."

"I am sure that you will," said Craven. "He has spoken of the plan to me, and kindly asked me to be of the party. Country life in France is charming, and will be new to you."

"All French life seems to me charming," she said. "I have never been more agreeably surprised than by what I have found it to be."

"You have been rarely fortunate in the aspect of it which you have seen," Craven observed. "Very few Americans, no matter what may be the degree of their wealth or social pretensions, are ever admitted to the circle into which Madame de Vérac has introduced you. Paris is very different from London in this respect. There is no circle in the latter place too exclusive for wealth to buy a way into it; but wealth may knock in vain at those doors which you have entered. It was not her money which carried Madame de Vérac across their thresholds, but her marriage and her personal qualities."

"She would not have been received if she had not become a Catholic, I suppose?" said Cecil meditatively.

"Received—oh! yes, in a degree. But there could not have been the same sympathy of feeling; for no doubt you have discovered that the religious question underlies the whole fabric of life."

"I have only discovered it since I have been here," she said. "Do not think me very dull not to have discovered it earlier. It has always seemed to me something altogether external, and independent of things which I now see that it enters into largely."

Craven shrugged his shoulders. "Narrow forms of religion," he said, "enter narrowly into life, and either make it as contracted in sentiment and motive as themselves by controlling it—witness the various forms of Puritanism—or become wholly external to it, without the power of influence even, far less of control. But Catholicity deserves its name, inasmuch as it is truly universal in all things. It is not only as wide as the world, but it is as wide as human nature. Nothing is foreign to it, and it enters into everything; for even those who oppose it pay tribute to its importance by the vehemence of their opposition."

Cecil regarded him with surprise. "Are you a Catholic?" she asked.

He shook his head, smiling. "No," he answered; "I am only a man of the world, who recognizes the greatest moral power in it."

CHAPTER IX.

"ACCORDING TO THE FASHION OF ROMANCE?"

CRAVEN'S warning, slight as it was, had an effect upon Miss Lorimer which that of the Vicomtesse had not exercised. The latter had only amused her, as it seemed to hint at danger for herself; but Craven had spoken of possible danger for another—and that other one whom she liked sincerely. Though she had laughed at such a possibility, she knew in her heart that it *was* a possibility—that, notwithstanding the witty classification of human nature and French nature, there is a vast amount of human nature in French nature, and that the prospect or intention of making a *mariage de convenance* in the future would not absolutely prevent a man from falling in love in the present.

Now, there was not a single impulse of coquetry in Cecil's nature. She not only had no desire that men should fall in love with her, but, on the contrary, she had a very strong desire that they should not do so, and she generally contrived to nip such an inclination in the bud. It only annoyed her and gave her pain when persisted in; and she had no wish either to give pain to the young Comte de Vérac or to be pained by feeling that she was the cause of suffering to him. After Craven's words, consequently, she observed Armand closely, and came to the decision that it would be a measure of prudence to be less frank and friendly

in her manner. As a result of this precaution, M. de Vérac soon perceived a change in her. It was delicate, it was almost imperceptible, but it was sufficient to mark the fact that the privilege of intimacy which he had found so delightful was, in a degree at least, withdrawn.

It was natural that he did not like this, and indeed if Cecil had subtly studied a means of animating his interest, she could not have been more successful in doing so. He began to say to himself more frequently, "If she had but a great American fortune!" and to reflect, in that case, what an altogether charming comtesse she would make. Meanwhile he did not suffer Madame de Vérac to forget her promise to go to his *château* for a visit. "We must show Miss Lorimer something of French country life," he would say. "I think the provinces will interest her."

Cecil was very sure that the provinces would interest her, for she felt as if she were already living in a romance. It was not modern Paris, with its glare and its glitter, its boulevards and avenues and foreign colonies, which pleased her, but that stately old Paris across the Seine—the Paris of the Faubourg St. Germain, of the Quartier Latin, of the Ile de la Cité. Her heart thrilled within her when she stood in the Sainte Chapelle —that matchless gem of architectural beauty—and thought of the Saint and King who had builded it to receive the Sacred Thorns. The lilies of France took new meaning when they were thus brought to adorn the shrine of the emblems and instruments of supreme suffering. In this spot history and poetry meet. The Ages of Faith are kneeling at the foot of Calvary; mail-clad Crusaders, who crossed land and sea to fight for

the Holy Sepulchre, have venerated the Thorns which crowned the sinless head of Christ, and devoutly heard the Mass which to-day, as on that long-past yesterday, renews the Sacrifice offered for the sins of men. Cecil could not indeed feel all this, but she felt enough to thrill her heart, as has been already said, and to make her exclaim, impulsively: "It is too beautiful not to be true."

"Beauty is not always an unfailing sign of truth," observed Craven, who chanced to be by her side at the moment.

She looked at him with a smile. "I did not mean beauty of outward form," she said, "but beauty and harmony of idea and feeling. It all suits so perfectly. This exquisite shrine is the expression of a faith and an ardor which were in perfect accord with the belief that inspired them. I can understand how it prompted men to such deeds as those which we recall here. What I cannot understand is how it has lost its force with the lapse of time."

"What influence is there which does not lose its force with the lapse of time?" said Craven. "It is the history of humanity."

"Human influences—yes," she answered. "But this was divine; so it must be the fault of men if it no longer animates them to the faith of St. Louis, and the deeds which proved that faith."

"What do you think of this, De Vérac?" asked Craven, turning to that young man. "Miss Lorimer wants to know why your faith does not animate you to the deeds of St. Louis."

"Miss Lorimer must remember," said the Comte, smiling, "that St. Louis is rather a difficult standard

by which to try men of any age, but especially men of the nineteenth century."

"I meant St. Louis merely as a type," answered Miss Lorimer. "I was wondering why the influence which was so strong at one time of the world's history has lost so much of its force now."

With the light of the stained glass pouring over her —that glorious, famous glass of the Sainte Chapelle, which modern art in vain endeavors to imitate—she stood looking up at the empty shrine like one who questions an oracle.

"The answer to that question would take us very far," said M. de Vérac. "You must be aware of some of the causes which have changed the piety of the Middle Ages into the indifference of modern times. But the influence which inspired that piety has not lost its force. Instead of the Crusaders we have to-day missionaries."

She made a little gesture of impatience. "As if you did not have them always! Always there were men who separated themselves from the world to serve God; but where are the men of the world who do great things for their faith now as then?"

"They exist, believe me, even here in France—although they do not now go to fight for the Holy Sepulchre."

She glanced significantly around at the empty chapel. "It seems to me that there are other sepulchres for which they might fight," she said.

"You are a little *exaltée* in your ideas, I fear, my dear Cecil," said Madame de Vérac's soft tones. "We must take the world as we find it, and not look for the Ages of Faith in the nineteenth century. Shall we go now? It is a little chill, I think."

They left the beautiful chapel of St. Louis, and went out into the sunshine ; but Cecil, who seemed still deep in meditation, rather startled her companions by presently saying, abruptly,

" Some day, if I ever build a church, I will duplicate, as far as modern art can do so, the Sainte Chapelle."

" Do you think that you are likely to build a church —yourself ?" asked Madame de Vérac, lifting her eyebrows a little.

" Why not ?" said Cecil, still absently. " Could one do better, if one had the necessary faith ?"

" Not possibly—if one had also the necessary money," said Craven, laughing.

" Oh, money !"—she seemed to rouse, and laughed herself. " Yes, that would certainly be necessary," she assented ; " but, after all, not so much so as faith."

She spoke carelessly, and her words had no significance for any one save Craven ; but he suddenly remembered how, not many days before, an American acquaintance had said to him, " I saw you at the opera with two beautiful women last night. One was Miss Lorimer the heiress, was it not ?"

" Miss Lorimer—yes," Craven had answered ; " but she is not an heiress, that I am aware of."

" She is considered so by those who know best," was the careless reply. " I believe no one knows exactly the amount of her father's fortune—he was a man who had all kinds of speculative investments everywhere—but he is thought to have left a large estate. I have heard it estimated at several millions."

" Such things are often exaggerated," said Craven. But to himself he thought that this might (if true) account for Jack Bernard's letter, his evident fears for

his beautiful sister-in-law, and that idea of her importance which had so much amused the man of the world. He had laughed over the letter when he first received it—laughed with good-humored contempt at the provincial imagination which conceived that a pretty American girl because she had been admired at home could be in danger of snares, matrimonial or any kind whatsoever, in Paris. But if she were an heiress—perhaps a great heiress—that would put another face on the matter. It began to seem to him that this was very probable. And if it were so? He smiled to himself, thinking of M. de Vérac. "If he had a suspicion of it, nothing could hold him in check," Craven reflected. "Is she going to test the disinterestedness of his passion, according to the fashion of romance? If so, I fear that she will be sadly disappointed. No Frenchman marries for love."

The question, however, had been left in so much doubt—his friend had spoken so carelessly and with so little exact knowledge—that he thought no more of it until Cecil's remark brought it again to his mind. Her princess-like way of announcing that if she had the necessary faith she would reproduce the Sainte Chapelle, and her reply to his suggestion about money, recalled what he had heard, and inclined him to believe that it might be true.

Up to this time he had left it in doubt whether he would accept De Vérac's invitation to join the party about to assemble at his *château*, but after this he let it be understood that his going was quite certain. In fact, his imagination was pleased with the idea of the mystery which he thought he had discovered, of the story that was probably going on, of the romantic

dénouement which might be its end. "When she has sufficiently tested his devotion, she will let him know that there is no obstacle to his happiness," Craven thought. "That will be the end—if the millions exist.'

Miss Lorimer gave as little thought as possible to her millions—that is, with regard to any probable suitors; but with regard to what was nearer her heart—the doing some great work for the good of others—she began to think much. It chanced that among the ladies of high rank whom the Vicomtesse most delighted to know, were two or three who were devout according to the type with which all the world has been made familiar in the beautiful characters of "A Sister's Story." With these ladies Cecil was particularly charmed. Austere devotion would have repelled her, but their gayety and grace lent an attraction to their piety; and when she found how unaffected and how deep the latter was, and especially when she was introduced to some of the great charities in which they were interested, her heart was filled with the desire to make a worthy use of the fortune which God had entrusted to her. She had thought of it often—her mind had never been engrossed with small things; she had realized the responsibility of wealth almost as soon as she had realized what wealth was to be hers; but her wishes and intentions had been as vague as possible. To do some great work, to help some great cause—this was what she had contemplated. But she knew not where to turn to look for the work or the cause.

Nor could it be said that she had found either yet. But she saw works of charity such as had never entered into her experience or knowledge before, and she felt that into such channels she would like to pour the

superfluity of her wealth. She was aflame with the desire to make a great and wide-reaching use of what had been given to her so lavishly, but the exact opportunity for which she was looking had not yet presented itself.

Meanwhile the brilliant days, made enjoyable by varied pleasures and occupations, passed swiftly ; and when the first burst of summer warmth came, the Vicomtesse declared that it was time to leave Paris.

"I generally go to my own country-house," she said. "It is not far from Paris, and is altogether modern and comfortable. For comfort one likes modern things as much as for picturesqueness one likes ancient ones. But Armand is so anxious that we should go to his *château*, that I must defer showing you my pretty villa on the Seine until later in the season. Villemur is a delightful place, and will enchant you."

"I am sure of that," said Cecil. "Everything M. de Vérac has told me of it sounds enchanting."

"You will find that he has not told half of its charms. It has been a grand place, and will be so again, I hope. Only money is needed to restore it to all its former splendor."

"Only money !" repeated Cecil, thoughtfully. "It is constantly a fresh surprise to me to realize what a factor money is in human life."

CHAPTER X.

"EVERY DOOR IS BARRED WITH GOLD."

VILLEMUR, the *château* of the Comte de Vérac, was indeed a fine old place—half feudal castle, half palace of the Renaissance, set in the midst of an extensive park, and, from its wide terraces, dominating the country for miles around. Its lords had once been seigneurs of a vast territory ; but with the lapse of time their power had been curtailed, their fortune diminished, their lands lost, until now the domain appertaining to the *château* was comparatively small, and much encumbered from the extravagance of the last possessor. As much as possible, the place had been put in order for the reception of the guests whom the young Comte was bringing ; but a little hurried work could not efface the neglect of years. Grounds and gardens were overgrown, fountains and statues were broken ; while the castle itself, with its splendid rooms, its courts, quadrangles, halls and galleries, was hardly more than a noble shell waiting for the touch of wealth to transform it into magnificence.

Yet it interested Cecil far more than if the change which the Vicomtesse so much desired had taken place. A few rooms were fitted up with the luxuries of modern comfort, but the remainder were filled with antique furniture, the styles of which ran back through centuries. The *château* was one of the few which had escaped pil-

lage in the Revolution, and was therefore most interesting to the antiquarian as well as to the artist.

"Do you not see what a place it could be made?" said the Vicomtesse, as they wandered through great suites of apartments. "Restored, it would be one of the most magnificent places in France. But it would take an immense fortune to restore it. Mine is not large enough. When I am done with it, it will give Armand a good income; but it can never restore Villemur."

"Perhaps Mademoiselle de Mirécourt—" began Cecil.

But Madame de Vérac shook her head. "Mademoiselle de Mirécourt's fortune is modest," she said. "It is rank and alliance that are to be gained there. But sometimes I think"—she paused a moment, looked around the magnificent *salon* in which they stood, walked to the window, glanced wistfully over the wide stretch of the park, and then concluded, thoughtfully—"sometimes I think that it might be better for Armand to marry an heiress. Others have thought so always, but I—I only think so when I look at Villemur. To restore this place, to make it all that it ought to be, and in making it that to make it also a stronghold for the Church and the King—that would be worth a sacrifice. When a man seeks wealth he must descend in rank; but, after all, there are some heiresses who would make worthy *châtelaines* even of Villemur."

Probably she was thinking of herself as she glanced toward a tall mirror, which gave back her graceful reflection. But Cecil could scarcely restrain a smile as she caught a glimpse in the same mirror of her own beauty, and knew how well she was able not only to

restore Villemur but to bear herself worthily as its *châtelaine.* For the first time it flashed through her mind that here might be the use which she was seeking for her wealth—not the mere vulgar use of repairing a ruined fortune, but the better one of restoring a great name and a great house ; of making Villemur itself all that Madame de Vérac dreamed ; and, more than that, to plant in it afresh the house of De Vérac, and transform its head from an insignificant adherent of a great cause to one of its leaders. All this passed before her like a vivid dream. She seemed to catch a view of possibilities as noble and far-reaching as the vista of stately rooms stretching before her. She had but to put forth her hand to make these possibilities realities. It was a dazzling thought.

The light of it was still in her eyes when presently the young Comte came to beg them to go out into the gardens. "I have some beautiful views to show you," he said. "Little else, I fear."

The views were beautiful indeed, but so were the gardens to Cecil, overgrown and neglected though they were. What noble possibilities were here as in the *château!* The terraces with their flights of marble steps, the long, green alleys, the picturesque pond filled with venerable carp, the great wooded stretches of the park —all enchanted her, all were full not only of actual beauty, but of romantic suggestions, of the poetry and splendor of the old life which passed away forever under the bloody wheel of the Revolution. She felt as if she were in a dream of past and future mingled. The stately figures of the *ancien régime* seemed to fill the wide spaces ; and mingling with them, as it were, was her own, adopting this life as her own, making this

place her home, beautifying, restoring, pouring a stream of wealth into it which would make its capabilities realities.

"You have more than a beautiful place," she said to the Comte, when they were walking a little apart. "It is a poem, and speaks of a great position and a great influence. The seigneur of Villemur is, I perceive, a much greater person than I had imagined."

He smiled in answer to her smile as she uttered the last words, but said, a little sadly: "You mean that the seigneur of Villemur should be a great person. That is true. But, unfortunately, what he should be is very different from what he is. The greatness of Villemur is a tradition of the past, and the influence of its lord is too limited in scope to be recognized in these days."

She made a slight motion of her hand over the wide and beautiful scene which lay before them—the smiling, fertile, verdant country, with the red roofs of its farmhouses scattered here and there, and the village of Villemur lying at its feet.

"Your influence must surely be recognized here," she said.

"Oh! *here*—yes, of course, after a manner it still exists here," he replied. "But I have never cared for this, and from the long absence of both my father and myself it has greatly diminished."

"But it could be restored," she said, thoughtfully. "From the position which God has given you, you are naturally the leader of these people—their leader in thought as well as in action. It seems to me that you might do much good, great good, here. Have I not heard you deplore the alienation of feeling between

classes in France, and the apathy of the people, especially in rural districts, toward the most vital political questions? Do you not believe that this could be in a great measure changed if men like yourself strove to win their confidence and regard, to instruct and direct them—in one word, to use nobly for noble ends the position and influence which are yours?"

She looked at him with a glance which seemed to see the noble ends of which she spoke—a glance so radiant with the glow of high thoughts that it might have fired a more sluggish nature than that of the Comte de Vérac. He responded with quick enthusiasm:

"Yes, all that is possible. You are right in thinking it. Much, very much, could be done here. But many things are needed in order to do it—things which I do not possess."

"You possess the essential things," she said, "and the others might be added."

He shrugged his shoulders lightly. "They might be—yes," he answered; "but it is not likely that they will be."

Cecil did not reply, and they walked on in silence for some moments. She felt like one who held in her hand the key to great possibilities, and she was tempted as she had never been tempted before—not by the splendid position which she might command, but by the opportunities for action and for good which seemed opening before her. She turned suddenly a quick, penetrating gaze on the young man.

"Tell me," she said, "what is the first, the most important thing which you need to enable you to do these things?"

He smiled. "Do not be disgusted," he replied, "if

I say that the first, the most important thing is money —a great deal of money. One cannot be a very important personage without it."

"Surely here, in the home of your race, your importance should not depend upon money."

"A poor man cannot live at Villemur," he said. "Or if he did, he would have little influence. You know the world well enough, I presume, to know that. And I am, comparatively speaking, a poor man. If I were not"—he looked at her with a glow in his eyes which was unmistakable—"there are things at which I would aim more important to me than those of which we have spoken."

"It does not appear to me that anything could be more important than those," she answered. "If you do not feel that, you would never be likely to accomplish them."

"A man might accomplish anything who had you for an inspirer," he said quickly. "You seem made for great things—not for small ones at all."

"I confess that I like great things better than small ones," she answered; "but life is so ordered that one has much more to do with small than great ones. And I suppose that true wisdom and sometimes true heroism consist in regarding the small ones as if they were great ones."

She spoke more to herself than to him, and it marked a great difference in Cecil, from what had formerly been her opinion, that such an idea had occurred to her, and that she recognized its force. The whole bent of her nature was so strongly toward great things, that it was difficult for her to realize the greatness that often lies in small things, when those small things are lifted to

nobleness by the purpose that underlies or the sacrifice that hallows them.

At this point, somewhat to her relief, they were joined by the rest of the party, and presently, when they assembled on the great terrace in front of the *château*, she was glad that Craven came up to her. Even if he had not been Bernard's friend she would have liked him, and all the better that his liking for herself was evidently of so calm an order ; but, being a link with the home and the friends she had left, he was specially agreeable to her. Just now, as she looked at his keen, thoughtful face, a recollection of their first, partly jesting words together occurred to her. "If you need a counsellor," he had said, "remember that you may command me." And a wild impulse seized her to take him at his word—to ask his advice, or at least to draw upon his knowledge of the people and things around her. She did not positively say to herself that under certain circumstances she would marry the Comte de Vérac, but she was conscious of a leaning, an attraction, which might result in such a decision. It did not at the moment occur to her that it was not so much the man himself who attracted her as the circumstances of his life and position. She had long ago made a covenant with herself that she would devote her fortune to some great end, to furthering some worthy cause ; was it the romantic charm of Villemur which tempted her to think that the end and the cause might be found here? She was asking herself this question when Craven spoke.

"I am sure you agree with me, Miss Lorimer, that our friend De Vérac is a lucky man to possess this noble old place. To have it might reconcile one to the danger

of being beheaded some day simply for the crime of its proprietorship."

Cecil smiled. "I hope M. de Vérac's head is in no danger," she answered; "but certainly it is a noble place, and ought to represent a great deal of power and influence."

"Perhaps so," said Craven doubtfully; "but in France at present a man is handicapped by a great name and an aristocratic position—that is, politically. An adventurer like Gambetta, or an obscure soldier like Boulanger, is the man who becomes leader of sentiment and opinion."

"But might not that be changed if, among the men of old name and hereditary rank, some one would arise with the capabilities of a leader?"

"If he were a man of genius of course he could do much; but, as I have already remarked, his rank would handicap him—unless he followed the *rôle* of Rochefort. And I suppose you are hardly thinking of that."

"Hardly. And yet I am sure—I feel positive—that such rank and position as are here might be used for great good—might give their possessor a great power to lead and influence men to the best ends, rather than, like Rochefort, to the worst."

"It might be," he assented; "but the man who could do this must have powers which I fear the Comte de Vérac, charming as he is, does not own. And, besides these powers, he must have an impersonal end in view. He must either be a philanthropist or an ardent partisan. M. de Vérac is neither."

"He is ambitious to serve the party to which he belongs."

"Yes, within due bounds. But the enthusiasm which

leads men to self-sacrifice is not in him, and without that no man will ever serve a cause greatly." Then, catching a sudden, startled look, as it were, in Cecil's eyes, he added: "Do not think that I mean to depreciate him. He has a good deal of generous ardor, I am sure; but he naturally thinks first of himself and his own ambitions. There are few men who do not."

"Few—yes. But there must be some, else great things would not be done."

He shrugged his shoulders lightly. "Are many great things done? I think not. But do not let me spoil your faith in any one, least of all in our pleasant young host. If I were so unfortunate as to do that, he would never forgive me; for there is no one whose good opinion he values more than yours."

She smiled a little sceptically. "Are you sure of that?" she asked. "I am not, by any means."

And then she turned away.

CHAPTER XI.

"IF SHE WERE AN HEIRESS!"

THE Vicomtesse was the next person who took Craven into her confidence. A day or two had elapsed since the arrival of the party at Villemur, and the devotion of the young host to his fair American guest could no longer escape notice. His passion had indeed passed beyond his own control, and, fanned by the close association with its object, was rapidly approaching the point when declaration became unnecessary. The Vicomtesse, who up to this time had viewed his fancy complacently enough, began now to take alarm, and the first result of this was her summoning Craven to a private interview.

"You have a great deal of tact," she began, "and I want your advice in a matter which is beginning to disquiet me."

He smiled. "A little judicious flattery sometimes does wonders in developing tact as well as other qualities," he remarked. "Mine is at your service. What is it that disquiets you?"

"I am sorry to say that it is the fear that Armand is acting very foolishly with regard to Cecil. Have you observed his manner toward her?"

Craven laughed a little. "I should be totally deficient in observation if I had not perceived that he is very much in love with Miss Lorimer," he replied.

"But you know your world—you know that he is not likely to allow a sentiment of the kind to interfere with the serious objects of his life."

"If I were sure of that I should not be disquieted at all," said the Vicomtesse frankly; "and for a time I *was* sure. But since we have been here I have changed my mind, and I think—I fear—that he is ready for any folly. What steps to take I do not know. Remonstrance from me would be useless if his infatuation is serious. I have thought that perhaps you might sound his intentions. He speaks to you very freely, does he not?"

"He has done so. I could sound his intentions very easily, I think. But how if they should prove to be what you fear?"

"In that case I should leave no means untried to change them. I could never forgive myself if I were the cause of his ruining his life by such a *mésalliance*."

"Do you really think it would be a *mésalliance?*" he asked, regarding her curiously. "It seems to me that Miss Lorimer would be a fit bride for a prince."

The Vicomtesse shrugged her shoulders impatiently. "Miss Lorimer in the abstract is very well," she answered. "With training she could fill any position. But Armand needs to look for much beside beauty and good manners. You know that."

"If she were an heiress would you object?"

"What is the good of such a supposition? She is *not* an heiress."

"I suppose not," said Craven, slowly; "but if she were—say that she had one of the great American fortunes—do you not think she would made a good Comtesse de Vérac then?"

"Even then I should prefer to see Armand marry in his own rank. But a great fortune could do so much for him and for Villemur that I should be reconciled if it were united with a person as irreproachable as Cecil. But why dwell on such an idea? I repeat that she is no heiress."

"Well, I will sound De Vérac, and let you know the result," said Craven. "Meanwhile do not let the matter annoy you. I have a firm belief that nothing which you fear will come to pass."

With these words he went away, smiling to himself; for he had a very well-defined idea of what would come to pass. After Cecil had tested the disinterestedness of De Vérac's affection, she would reward him with her fortune and herself in approved romantic style, he had no doubt. He was a shrewd observer, and her manner of late had made him sure of this.

Some little time elapsed before he had an opportunity to approach De Vérac on the subject. But when he did so, he found the young man not at all inclined to evade him; indeed it seemed a great relief to him to speak frankly.

"Yes," he said, "I confess that I find Miss Lorimer so charming that if I were differently situated I should not hesitate to offer myself to her. But"—he flung out his hands with a dramatic gesture—"under the circumstances what can I do?"

"Well," said Craven, coolly, "if by the circumstances you mean that you cannot marry her, I should say that you could at least refrain from making your admiration so manifest."

"But why should I refrain from manifesting what I feel with the utmost intensity? I have never seen any

woman whom I admire so much—whom I could so readily adore. She *is* adorable, Mademoiselle Cecil—so noble, so high-minded, so above all coquetry."

"She is a very fine type, though a little spoiled," said Craven. "But what has that to do with the fact that a man who does not mean to marry a woman has no right to let her see that he 'adores' her?"

"I have not shown her that," said the young Comte.

"Yes, you have shown that, not only to her, but to every one else. And the question now arises, What are you going to do?"

"To do!" The young man stared. "What is there for me to do? *Ma foi*, you know well how I am placed. I have a fortune to retrieve, a future to make, a position to maintain. All of these things, which are absolute duties, render it impossible for me to follow the dictates of my heart."

"Then you should keep the dictates of your heart more under control," said Craven, dryly. "I am to understand that you have no intention whatever of offering yourself to Miss Lorimer?"

"How can I have such an intention?" asked De Vérac, in a tone of despair. "You know that with us marriage is not a matter of sentiment. I have to think of others beside myself—of the family I represent. And yet," he continued, turning suddenly and beginning to walk up and down the floor, "I confess that I am greatly tempted. I have never been so charmed by any woman. If she had anything suitable in the way of fortune, all might be arranged. Tell me, my friend, do you know with any positiveness what *dot* she has?"

"I know nothing whatever concerning her fortune,"

answered Craven, with perfect truthfulness. "But if you wish, I will inquire."

"Of whom?"

"Of herself. Who else could be so well informed?"

"Impossible. She would misunderstand. Our French ideas and customs seem to your people mercenary—do I not know that?"

"I think that I can obtain the information you ask without betraying your interest in the subject. And it is well that the matter should be ended, one way or another."

"Yes, it must be ended," said the other, gloomily. "Find out if you can, then, what fortune Miss Lorimer has; and if it is any amount which would justify me in offering myself to her, no one will ever be more grateful to you than I."

It was not a desire to win the gratitude of the Comte de Vérac, however, which made Craven feel that it was not an unpleasant task to sound Cecil Lorimer's intentions. His own curiosity and interest were very much aroused, and the opportunity to learn what she really meant to do was too tempting to be resisted. Watching, then, an opportunity to speak to her in private, he saw her from his window one morning early, walking alone down the great avenue of chestnuts which led toward the village; and, hastening out, he overtook her.

"Will you pardon me for running you down?" he said rather breathlessly as he came up to her. "The temptation was beyond my power to resist. I saw you from my window, and, supposing that you were drawn out by the beauty of the morning for a walk, have ventured to join you."

She hesitated for a moment in a manner which led him to imagine that he might have made a mistake, but the next instant smiled with her usual frankness.

"The beauty of the morning did draw me out," she said; "but not merely for a walk. I am going to the village for a purpose. You can come with me if you like, but I doubt if you will care to do so when you hear where I am going."

"Try me," he answered, smiling, yet curious to know where she could be going.

She colored a little as she said: "I am going down to the village church. I have a fancy to see it. I liked M. le Curé so much when he was at the *château* the other evening. And, then, I fell into the habit of going to the churches in Paris."

"Oh!" said Craven. It was a very expressive sound, and signified many things—among the rest that, in the speaker's opinion, Miss Lorimer was already fitting herself for the part of Comtesse de Vérac. What else could this attraction toward Catholic churches mean? But he did not betray these sentiments; he only said that he would be very happy to pay a visit to the village church, and added that he too had been pleased with the Curé.

Craven and Cecil found the village of Villemur a very pretty place—its houses, scattered among orchards and small fields, embowered in shade, and with an air of smiling peace and comfort. A bright stream ran through the little hamlet, and turned a mill at the end. The flashing wheel and the red gables of the house made a charming picture, set in a frame of green. The church stood at the end of the village nearest the *château*. It was old and not unpicturesque, but, like

almost all parish churches in France, bore marks of neglect and decay—admirable results of the care of a paternal Government.

When Craven and Cecil entered they found a gray interior in which there was very little light or color. What there was flowed in through the tall, narrow windows near the roof. A number of figures were kneeling on the stone floor ; for the Curé, just vested, was about to begin Mass. Craven led his companion to one of the wooden benches, expecting her to sit down as a spectator of the scene ; and he was not a little surprised when, instead of this, she knelt. "The thing must be certain!" he said to himself philosophically, as *he* sat down, and, while preserving something of a reverential attitude, observed Miss Lorimer out of the end of his eye. Her graceful, fashionably dressed figure formed a striking contrast to those around her, but it was one of which she was wholly unconscious. It needed but a glance at her face to show that no one of the worshippers near them was more absorbed in what was taking place at the altar than this girl, with her noble profile, her clear, earnest eye. She watched every motion of the priest, as if intently studying it, and seeking an answer to some question, some need of her soul. The longer Craven observed her the more he felt certain that she had not come here from mere curiosity, nor yet from any worldly motive such as he had at first credited her with, but from a deep and eager interest, a desire for some great verity which she believed might be found here.

He was so absorbed in these thoughts and the study of her face that he did not notice when the Mass came to an end, until she rose and turned toward him. Then

they went out, the bright warmth of the outer day seeming to meet them with a rush as they emerged from the gray old sanctuary.

"That was very interesting," said Craven; "but, I confess, a little chilly and depressing to me. This is more pleasant, do you not think so?"

"This is delightful," she replied; "but I liked that too. It was so picturesque and so full of devotional feeling. These old churches affect me peculiarly, quite apart from their beauty. There seems an atmosphere of faith in them. How devout the people were! And how absorbed the priest was in the Sacrifice he was offering! I seemed to realize this morning that it *was* a sacrifice. One felt it there."

She spoke as if thinking aloud rather than as if expecting an answer; but Craven said: "One always feels in these churches the reality of the faith which made and fills them. But to share it—that is another matter. One might be glad to do so if one could, but the power of the modern world is too strong with most of us."

"I forget the modern world entirely when I enter such a place," she said. "I cannot say, either, that I step back into the Middle Ages, because I simply feel as if time did not matter there—as if it were for all time, as the needs of human nature are for all time."

"With those sentiments it is likely that some day you will become a Catholic," Craven remarked.

"I don't know," she answered. "The religion attracts me very much, from its passionate reality, from the meaning that it gives to human life, and the incentive to great deeds. But I must learn more of its intellectual side before I could think of embracing it. I

am not very emotional; my mind must lead my heart."

He looked at her with a smile. "In all things?" he asked.

"In most things, at least," she answered; "and I am not sure that I might not say in all."

There was a minute's silence, as, leaving the pretty village street behind them, they walked toward the great gates of the park. Then, nerving himself, Craven said: "Will you forgive me if I venture to ask what your mind says to your heart about becoming Comtesse de Vérac?"

She regarded him with astonishment for an instant, then a faint smile appeared around the corners of her mouth.

"It strikes me that the best reply to your question is by another," she said. "Why should my mind, or my heart either, say anything to me about becoming Comtesse de Vérac?"

"Because you certainly cannot be unaware of what is evident to every one else—the devotion of the Comte de Vérac."

She lifted her shoulders with a Gallic gesture. "The devotion of the Comte de Vérac is as evident to me as to others," she said carelessly; "but do you imagine that I need to be told that it means—just nothing? I have not been three months in France without learning something of the customs of the country. And indeed before I had been with her three days the Vicomtesse had fully explained to me the position of her nephew—whom he was to marry, and how and why. Therefore I am able to appreciate the exact value of his devotion to me."

"It is a very sincere devotion, I assure you," said Craven. "You do him injustice if you think otherwise. Of course he is in a manner bound by the customs of his country and the traditions of his class. But his feelings have ignored these things entirely. He is ardently in love with you."

"What then?" she asked.

"Well"—the diplomatist found himself hesitating a little—"he is naturally anxious to find some way of reconciling his attachment with what he conceives to be his duty to his family. You know he is not rich. It is necessary, if he is to maintain his position, that he shall improve his fortune by marrying. And so—"

"And so," she said, with the same composure, "he has made you his ambassador to discover if he could improve his fortune by marrying *me*."

"Not exactly," Craven answered. "I will be perfectly frank with you, for I am sure you are too sensible to misunderstand matters. This young man is earnestly attached to you; but, as you have said, you have been in France long enough to learn something of the customs of the country, and you know that in marriage much is considered beside the sentiments of the parties concerned. This is specially the case with him, because he is the head of his family, and, the estate having been much impoverished, he is naturally anxious to restore what has been lost. Marriage offers him a recognized and approved mode of doing this. Try to put yourself in sympathy with the position in order to comprehend it."

"I think that I am in sympathy and do comprehend it perfectly," she said. "Have no fear of my misunderstanding anything you wish to tell me."

"Then what I wish to tell you is that this young man is—to use his own form of expression—in despair over his inability to reconcile his attachment to you with his duty to his family and his position. He has expressed his feelings very freely to me, and I volunteered to ascertain if there were no way by which they *could* be reconciled. I was very prudent, however; give me credit for that. I did not even hint to him that the whole solution lay in Miss Lorimer's own hand—that I had heard she possessed a fortune which would make all things possible."

Cecil turned upon him quickly, catching her breath with a slight gasp. "So you have heard it!" she said.

He laughed slightly. "Yes, I heard it some time ago," he answered; "but I did not know whether or not to believe that any heiress would so conceal her splendor. I am satisfied now."

She colored with vexation. "You did not know then," she said. "You only suspected, and now you have made me betray myself! Do you call that fair?"

"I call it shamefully unfair," he replied, cheerfully. "But what does it matter? I have gratified my curiosity—I confess that I *was* curious on the subject—and your secret is safe with me, if you wish it kept a secret."

She did not answer immediately, but as she walked on at a quickened pace, with heightened color, Craven saw she was displeased.

"I know what you are thinking," he said presently. "You are saying to yourself that I am meddling with what does not concern me, and that I am very impertinent beside. I grant that this would be so if I did not really have your interest at heart. But should I be

your friend if I did not try to serve you to the best of my ability? You know it is proverbial that lookers-on see most of the game, and I have been a looker-on who has observed a good deal. Shall I tell you what I think I have seen?"

Already Cecil's vexation was passing. She looked at him with her frank smile, and said: "Yes, you may tell me, in order that I may see exactly how great your mistakes have been."

"Oh, my mistakes! I have no doubt made any amount of them," he answered. "Still, I think I have perceived some things which are facts—for instance, I have perceived on one hand a lover held back from declaring his passion by the circumstances in which he stands, and a lady possessing the power to make all things smooth, but concealing this fact, and waiting—forgive me if I vex you again!—for a romantic declaration, which under these circumstances could not come."

The bright blood sprang now in a tide to Cecil's face. She threw her head back haughtily. "I am glad," she cried, "that you have proved how little you really know about me. *I* waiting for a declaration, romantic or otherwise! I could laugh at the absurdity of such a mistake, if I were not too angry."

"I am glad that you confess to being angry," he said, smiling. "When people are angry they are not always the best judges of things. But, really, what is there to be angry at? I am only crediting you with a little romance, and that is not a crime, although there are people in the world who think it so."

"You are crediting me then with something of which I have not a fragment. Surely I had a right to be silent about my fortune, which concerns only myself. One

need not be romantic to desire to spare one's self annoyance ; and I knew that if it were known how rich I am, I should be annoyed. That is the beginning and the end of the matter. As for wishing to test any one's disinterestedness—no such idea ever entered my head. I am too well aware of the French customs of which you have spoken to have had any fear of a serious declaration from M. de Vérac. If I wished to marry him, I would simply let the Vicomtesse know the amount of my fortune, and the affair would arrange itself."

"Then you do *not* mean to marry him," said Craven, betrayed by his curiosity and interest into a direct questioning which astonished himself.

But instead of rebuking, Cecil looked at him with a half-appealing glance. "I have been asking myself that question," she said. "Will you help me to answer it? I think the time has come when I should like the benefit of the knowledge which you put long ago at my service. You cannot give it to me now, for here we are at the *château*. But we will take the first opportunity for a little quiet speech together. Here comes M. de Vérac. Not another word!"

CHAPTER XII.

"I HAVE BEEN TEMPTED."

THE grand *salon* at Villemur presented a scene in the evening which always delighted Cecil. Its splendid proportions, its great carved chimney-piece, its polished floor reflecting the clustered waxlights, its mirrors and pictures, made a setting for the groups of graceful figures which rendered the whole picturesque in the extreme. The long windows opened on a terrace without, which at this time was flooded with moonlight, and below which lay the gardens and park, a vision of fairy-like beauty.

It had never seemed more charming to her than on the evening after her morning walk and conversation with Craven. She realized now that the time had come when she must put out her hand and make all this her own, or else renounce it wholly. She had played with it, as it were—had felt a pleasure in the sense that it might be hers by a word or gesture. It was like acting a part in a drama to fancy herself transported into this life, *châtelaine* of this noble place. But now the hour had come when she was bound to decide whether the part was to become real or not; and, if not, it was only right that she should remove herself out of the path of a man whom she did not mean to marry. The decision made her sad. Villemur had never seemed so attractive, so fascinating, as when the need to renounce

it was thus sharply felt ; and yet not even Villemur was worth the price she would have to pay for it. She felt quite sure of that now.

In this mood Craven found her when he joined her after dinner near one of the great windows opening on the terrace. On one hand was the long, brilliant *salon ;* on the other, the silver, silent night. "Is it not beautiful ?" she said, indicating the last with a motion of her fan. "I am tempted to forget I am in France and to take a turn without."

"Come," said Craven, stepping outside and holding back the curtain. "Even in France we may be permitted to walk as far as the end of the terrace. It *is* a divinely beautiful night."

She followed him after an instant's hesitation, and together they paced the terrace, almost in silence for several minutes. Then Craven, glancing from the stately balustraded terrace, the wide garden and sleeping park, to the great front of the *château* sparkling with lights, and the brilliant scene revealed through the *salon* windows, said meditatively :

"And so you are in doubt whether you will accept Villemur together with its lord. Do you know that if I were a woman in such a position I think I should be —tempted ?"

"Do you suppose I have not been tempted ?" asked Cecil. "More than I like to consider. Everything that the worldly side of me likes best is here—great position, high rank, picturesque splendor, and the opportunity to use my wealth in the most effective manner to augment all these things. Why, this very scene, with all it suggests, is a fascination and a temptation ! Then I like M. de Vérac very well—as much, I suppose,

as I shall ever like any man—why do you laugh ?" she asked suddenly and rather haughtily of Craven.

"Did I laugh ?" he said. "Pardon me, but I was thinking how far from flattering to M. de Vérac your sentiments toward him were."

"If you knew me better," she replied, "you would know that, on the contrary, they are very flattering. He is the only man of whom I have ever said so much, or concerning whom I have ever taken into consideration what I have considered with regard to him."

"Well," said Craven, "the last fact is certainly flattering to him ; but I am very sure he would hope to inspire a little more warmth of sentiment. However, forgive me if I am impertinent. You think him, then, the most interesting man you have ever known ?"

"No," said Cecil. The word came from her distinct and clear-cut in its denial before she even stopped to think. It was a sudden, leaping memory which rose before her like a vivid picture. She saw the deck of a ship, she looked at the long track of silver foam stretching across illimitable water, and she heard a voice saying : "Your kindness has made this voyage like that track of foam across the ocean—a pathway which I shall never find again, but which will remain always in my memory as luminous and as enchanted as it looks now." The haunting melody of the voice which uttered these words seemed sounding in her ears, rendering it impossible for her to say that the Comte de Vérac was the most interesting man she had ever known. But within a minute she had qualified her denial ; for she felt, not for the first time, an emotion almost of anger against the depth of impression which a stranger had made upon her.

"The mysterious always interests one more than the known," she said. "Therefore it is natural that a man whom I knew for a short time only might interest me more than M. de Vérac, whom I now know very well. There are no longer any mysteries about *him* to pique one's curiosity; but he satisfies my taste—which is not easily satisfied—and he is a man who would not devote his life to ignoble ends."

"Believing these things of him," remarked Craven, who began to find this young lady as much of a puzzle as her family and friends had already found her, "why do you hesitate to marry him?"

"For many reasons," she answered. "I wonder if I can hope to make you understand them."

"I can venture to say for myself that I am not, as a rule, very obtuse," Craven observed.

She did not reply at once, but stood leaning against the massive balustrade, herself a picture in her dress of creamy lace, the folds of which seemed of ethereal softness in the moonlight, while her beautiful head rose above them with statue-like grace. She did not look toward the brilliant *salon*, but out over the silver-flooded gardens, as she said, slowly:

"A little while ago I told you that the things which M. de Vérac offers—or would offer if he knew the amount of my fortune—tempted the worldly side of my nature, for they are all things which I like extremely. I need scarcely say that it is not the mere splendor of Villemur which fascinates me—I could build a more splendid house myself if I wished to do so—but the spell of the past, the associations and traditions which throw a charm over it. I have always dreamed of doing something great with the power which my money

gives me. Unless I can do that, I confess that it is of small value to me and can buy little for which I care. Now since I have been here I have seemed to see an opportunity where it could accomplish much ; but when I put it all before myself I think, ' Granted all that appears possible to be accomplished, what then ? Who will really be the better for it in any enduring sense ? ' I am afraid it is a case of anticipated *vanitas vanitatem*,'' she said, looking at him with a smile.

" I believe I understand you,'' he said, thinking that she was quite the most interesting study in the form of a young woman that had ever crossed his path. " You would restore Villemur, you would render the house of De Vérac again one of the foremost in France, you would enable the young Comte to become probably a noted if not a great man. But having done this, you would not feel as if you had really served any very lofty end.''

" No,'' she said ; " for it would all be more or less selfish, and would reflect back upon myself. I should share in it all, benefit from it all. And I fear that, except M. de Vérac, scarcely any one else would be benefited by it, save very indirectly. Now this is not the sort of object that I have always had in view. What I should like to do is something that would benefit a great number—something in which I would have no share except the pleasure of knowing that I had done it. Does all this seem to you very foolish ?''

" No,'' Craven answered, " it seems to me just the opposite of foolish. I wish all heiresses had such thoughts. But worldly prudence bids me warn you that unless you are very cautious they will lead you into quicksands of philanthropy. It is possible to make

awful blunders, and do much harm, too, in trying to benefit one's fellow-creatures."

"I know that," she replied, "and I have been cautious. I do not think that I am yet old enough or wise enough to decide what it is best to do. But I don't want to put it out of my power to do anything—I don't want to burden my soul with the life-long regret of a lost opportunity. That, I suppose, is why I have never thought of marriage as other women think of it. I have felt that I wanted free hands when I saw at last the opportunity which I have been looking for. I claim no credit for these thoughts; my father taught them to me. He never meant to leave so much money to me; he meant himself to do some great good with it. But he was cut off suddenly in the midst of a busy life, and he had only time to remind me that he left me a great responsibility as well as a great fortune. 'Use it nobly for others, not selfishly for yourself,' he said; and, God helping me, it is so that I will use it."

"Surely God will help you," said Craven, touched to unwonted reverence. "You told me this morning that I did not know you. I find now that you were right. How small and petty my idea of you seems beside the reality you show me! Villemur is a noble place, Miss Lorimer, but it is not noble enough for you."

"I have no such thought as that," she answered quietly; "but in saying that Villemur tempted me, I think that I put the matter in the right light. It *was* a temptation from what I have always felt to be a duty, and so I must put it behind me and go on, not looking back."

"May I ask how long you have felt sure of this?" Craven said.

"Only since this morning," she replied. "Up to that time I was so doubtful that I said to myself—see how freely I am talking to you, Mr. Craven! but I think you will comprehend if you do not sympathize with me."

"I certainly comprehend, and I hope that I sympathize with you," he responded. "More than that; I am deeply interested in all that you care to tell me of your feeling in this matter."

"Briefly, then, you know what Catholics believe—that God Himself is present upon their altars. Well, in my doubt, my uncertainty, I said to myself: 'Surely, if I go and address Him directly, there where so many pious souls believe Him to dwell, He will enlighten and direct me.' I went, as you know, and while I was there some strong influence seemed upon me—*I could not doubt;* I could not say to myself as I say now to you, 'If this is true.' I felt that it was true. And if I never have another such hour of faith again, it is something to have had it once—something to have realized that I was in the immediate presence of God, that I could speak to Him with the certainty of being heard. I did speak with all the energy of my soul, and I believe that I have had my answer. At least since then my doubts are at an end. All this"—she waved her hand toward the stately *château* and noble park—"is but a brilliant temptation, which I must put away and go."

"I am sorry for M. de Vérac," said Craven; "but I believe that, whatever power has inspired your resolution, you are right."

"I have no doubt of it," she said. "And now what I have to ask of your kindness is that you will if pos-

sible spare M. de Vérac the knowledge of what he has lost—of course I allude to my fortune. I hope that he will never hear of it. And, in sparing him, you will also spare me one of the most painful things which can be laid on a woman—the necessity of rejecting a man whom she really likes."

"I will hold your confidence sacred as far as the fortune is concerned," said Craven, "and will endeavor to restrain M. de Vérac's ardor; but, after all, there is a great deal of human nature even in French nature, and the human nature may triumph over the French nature in his case if you do not take your dangerous attractions out of his way."

"I am going to do that as soon as possible," she answered. "My friend, Miss Marriott, with whom I came over, is at one of the German spas. I have written saying that I would like to join her. As soon as I hear from her I shall bid adieu to the Vicomtesse as gracefully as I can; and, unless she should hear of my fortune meantime, she will be glad to let me go, for I think she begins to consider me dangerous."

"There is no doubt of it," said Craven. "She is trembling—poor woman!—lest the very best that could befall her nephew should befall him. What a lesson on our blindness in this life! I am sufficiently sorry for her to hope that she may never learn the truth."

"So do I hope so," replied Cecil. "One thing at least is certain: she will never learn it from me. And now that all is clear and settled we must remember *les convenances* and return to the *salon*."

CHAPTER XIII.

"THESE THINGS ARE DONE THROUGH FRIENDS."

IT required all of Craven's diplomacy to manage the Comte de Vérac, and satisfy his inquiries with regard to Miss Lorimer. The young man had hoped much from his ambassador—the hope inspired by the ambassador's manner rather than his words ; for Craven had at the time, as we know, felt very certain of a favorable issue to the matter. He had been very prudent—in speech. But something in tone or look had betrayed his inward assurance, and prepared the disappointment which he now found it hard to soothe.

"Tell me exactly what you discovered," said the Comte imperiously. "Let me be the judge whether or not there is a hope for me."

"It is impossible for me to tell you exactly what I discovered," answered Craven, who began to regret the intermediary part he had undertaken, "because it was in a measure confidential. I can only assure you that it is impossible for you to think of marriage with Miss Lorimer."

"On account of her fortune ?"

"Yes, on account of her fortune," Craven replied, glad that the question had not been "on account of her *want* of fortune." Then, conscious of a twinge of conscience, he went hastily on : "She is a strange girl—altogether built on very original lines—and, fortune

apart, I do not think that a marriage with her would be either for your happiness or hers."

"I have great respect for your judgment, my friend," said M. de Vérac stiffly; "but this is a point on which no man can judge for another. If the practical side of the affair could be arranged, I should leave Miss Lorimer to decide whether or not she could be happy with me. There is no question in my mind of my happiness with *her*."

"It is very likely that there is no question in your mind," replied Craven, "but that is not saying that there is no question in fact. And, unless I am much mistaken, Miss Lorimer would recognize it."

"Did you betray me to her?" asked the other quickly and haughtily.

"I betrayed nothing," answered Craven, beginning to be irritated in his turn. "Do you think that your sentiments, which have been sufficiently obvious, needed any betrayal? But you may be sure of one thing—that Miss Lorimer is not a woman to make mistakes in such matters, even if you suppose me capable of making them. It was a very delicate business; I did my best for you to spare you awkwardness and pain, and I have my reward in suspicion and fault-finding."

"No," said the young man, looking a little ashamed, "not that. If I am hasty, you must allow something for my disappointment. I have been foolish enough to hope much since I talked to you—to think that something might be discovered or arranged. I cannot resign myself to believe that nothing is possible."

Craven shrugged his shoulders. "If you wish to satisfy yourself," he said, "the way is open. I am

sure that Miss Lorimer will answer frankly any question that you may ask her."

"You know that it is impossible for me to ask her any question," replied M. de Vérac gloomily. "One cannot go to a lady and say, 'Mademoiselle, I should like to marry you, but I must first know the amount of your fortune.' These things are done through friends."

"Exactly," said Craven; "and if the friends fail to accomplish the impossible, they are not thanked for their effort, but blamed for their failure. It is an old story, but I forgive you for your ingratitude; you are in love and consequently unreasonable."

"I am neither ungrateful nor unreasonable," answered the Comte, "but I am in despair. My hands are tied—I can do nothing; and yet I adore her, my friend—I adore her!"

"Why have you not courage enough to go and tell her so, then?" thought Craven, with a sense of wonder. He had an instinct that if this were done—if, risking the loss of some ambitions, the young man went to Cecil with genuine passion and true tenderness, he might, by the all-potent force of strong feeling, conquer her hesitations, and win a reward of which he did not dream. But even to hint this was impossible. "And, after all," said the philosopher to himself, "it is better as it is. A *mariage de convenance* will suit him best in the end. The fire of genuine passion is not in him; perhaps it is too much to expect that it should be. Few and far between are the men—or women either—who have in their nature the power of sacrifice. If all passions were put to that test, small would be the number great enough to bear it successfully; and why, then, should I wonder that this man does not display

what is so rare? Let him go. No doubt he is good enough in his way, but not worthy of Cecil Lorimer. No man *is* worthy of her who would not be willing to dare or to sacrifice anything to win her."

With these sentiments it is likely that M. de Vérac did not find him a very sympathizing listener. At least the interview ended soon after this; and Craven ejaculated with a sigh of relief as they parted, "Thank Heaven, that is over!"

His interview with the Vicomtesse was more agreeable. For one thing, she was always agreeable to him; for another, it was a more pleasant task to end her disquietude than to listen to M. de Vérac's complaints. Seated in her boudoir—an apartment charmingly and luxuriously fitted up for her specially—they discussed the matter much as they had discussed Cecil's coming, on that bygone spring day in Paris.

"And you are certain, then," observed the Vicomtesse, after listening to a report in which only the fact of Cecil's fortune was suppressed, "that Armand has no intention of offering himself to her?"

"I am as certain as one can be of anything that depends on the purpose of another," Craven replied. "He declares that he adores her and that he is in despair—"

"That of course!" said the lady, with a gesture of her fan which meant that it signified nothing.

"But that he has not the least intention of asking her to marry him," Craven went on. "He seems as thoroughly reasonable on the subject, as little disposed to romantic disinterestedness, as you could desire."

If there was a faint inflection of sarcasm in the last words, Madame de Vérac did not hear it. Delicate and

refined as she was, on this subject the world had rendered her thoroughly obtuse. Romantic disinterestedness in such a case was for her only another name for criminal folly.

"It is a great relief to my mind to hear it," she said. "I confess that I have been very uneasy. I know Armand well, and the things that have most weight with him. But a man in love—passionately in love—is for the time insane. He will commit acts of folly, he will even make sacrifices of his best interests, which he will bitterly repent as soon as he is sane. Wise women, knowing this, do not accept such sacrifices; but many women have to learn their wisdom at a bitter cost. It would have been too much to expect Cecil to be wise if so brilliant an opportunity had been placed before her. I am more than glad, therefore, that my fears were unfounded, and that she is to be spared the temptation."

It required an effort of self-control at this point for Craven to repress a smile. He thought of Cecil's words —"a temptation which I must put behind me"—and wondered to himself what the sensations of the Vicomtesse would be if the truth were revealed to her. To reveal it being out of the question, he decided to make Miss Lorimer's way as smooth for her as possible.

"Yes," he observed, "things seem for the present to have reached a very satisfactory point; but you must let me say that I do not think it would be well to put De Vérac's resolution to a prolonged test. He is very much in love, and, as you remarked a moment ago, a man in love is capable of inconceivable folly. The less he sees of Miss Lorimer for some time to come, the better."

"You are right," said the Vicomtesse. "I have been

thinking of that myself. I should like to take her away at once, but how can I? By Armand's request I am here as hostess; and with this party of people on my hands, it is impossible for me to leave." She was silent for a moment, reflecting deeply, her fair brow knitted into unusual lines; then she looked at him and said: "Why do we not follow our instincts? Or, rather, why *do* we follow our impulses? You remember our conversation about Cecil before she came—how I told you that I regretted having asked her to come, and dreaded the result? My dread is justified at last. I like her—no one could help liking her—but if Armand throws away the chances of his life by marrying her, it will break my heart."

"Have no fear of it," answered Craven. "M. de Vérac has no intention of throwing away any of the chances of his life; and if he were so foolish as to dream of it, Miss Lorimer would not allow him to do so. Of that I am sure."

His listener made a gesture which indicated profound incredulity. "When you say such things as that I lose respect for your judgment," she remarked. "There is no young and ambitious woman who would reject Armand and all that he has to offer. *You* may fancy so, but I know better. However, we will not discuss what she might or might not do in a situation which I devoutly trust may never arise. I must put it out of her power as soon as possible to do anything, by taking her away. I will go to England, to Russia—anywhere to get her out of Armand's path."

"I hope there will be no need for you to sacrifice yourself to that extent," said Craven, with a smile.

And indeed it was on the very next day that the

mind of the Vicomtesse was set at rest by Cecil herself.

Miss Marriott's letter came, full of rapturous assent to her request and delight at the idea of her companionship. "I did not venture to suggest that you should come," she wrote, "because you seemed to be enjoying your life in France so much, and it is far more brilliant than anything you will find with us; but I have been longing for you all the same. I never see anything beautiful that I do not wish for you to share it with me, for there is no artistic or intellectual pleasure that is lost on you. We are going into the Tyrol next week, and when it was first spoken of I thought, 'Oh, if Cecil were only with me, how charming it would be!' Fancy, then, my delighted surprise, when I received your letter. I could scarcely believe my good fortune as I read it, so seldom in life do we obtain what we want so quickly and so completely. Come, then, immediately. Our departure into the Tyrol will be delayed until you join us. Shall John meet you anywhere? He will be delighted to do so. Write at once and let us know."

It was pleasant to be welcomed so warmly, and with this letter in her hand Cecil went to seek Madame de Vérac. She found her in her boudoir with her own letters—for after the post came in there was a general separation of the guests with their correspondence.

"Do I disturb you?" Miss Lorimer asked. "I have something here that I would like to speak to you about; but if you are occupied I can wait."

"Oh, no!" replied the Vicomtesse, dropping carelessly a note that she was reading. "These things

amount to nothing. What have you there?" she continued, with a somewhat apprehensive glance toward the missive which Cecil held.

"A letter from my friend Grace Marriott, with whom I crossed the ocean," was the reply. "You may remember that I have spoken of her. She is in Germany with her brother and his family, and she writes me that they are going into the Tyrol next week, and would like me to join them. It is one of the countries I desire most to see; and if you do not object to my leaving you, I think I will take advantage of the opportunity."

With all her worldly training, the Vicomtesse could not suppress the glow of pleasure and satisfaction which came over her. Her whole face changed, her eyes brightened, she smiled radiantly. "I could not be selfish enough to desire to keep you from anything so pleasant," she said. "I shall be desolated to part with you, but it is only fair that I should spare you to your friends if you wish to go. But you will return to me again?"

"Oh, yes! I certainly hope to see you again before I leave Europe," Cecil answered. "My visit to you has been altogether charming, and I shall never forget your kindness."

"If you have enjoyed the time you have spent with me *I* am charmed," said the Vicomtesse; "for your companionship has been delightful to me. I am sorry that it is necessary for us to part. But you do not think of going before our visit to Villemur is ended?"

"Yes," answered Cecil, who understood the solicitude beneath this question. "If I am to join the Mar-

riotts before their journey into Tyrol, it is necessary that I should start at once. I should not like to delay them. Do not think me abrupt in departure if I say that I must go to-morrow."

CHAPTER XIV.

AT THE DOOR OF SANT' AGNESE.

IT was the 21st of January, the Feast of St. Agnes, and from the famous basilica beyond the walls of Rome which bears her name a large crowd was pouring. The High Mass was over, together with the beautiful ceremony of blessing the lambs ; and as the multitude, Roman and foreign, passed out into the open air many groups remained in the church—some for purposes of worship, others for purposes of sight-seeing.

For not even in Rome is there anything more interesting than this ancient church. It is one of the very few which have preserved unchanged their original form and arrangement. As we see it now, so in all essential particulars it appeared in the fourth century, when it was built by Constantine, at the request of his daughter Constantia, on the spot where the body of St. Agnes was discovered. Entering down the long flight of marble steps which descend from what is now the level of the soil to the pavement of the church, we see before us, unaltered, an ancient Christian basilica. The wide nave, the rows of noble columns, the high altar majestically closing the vista, and the confession of St. Agnes underneath, where the remains are deposited—what unnumbered generations have gazed upon these objects as we see them now ! Rome is like eternity ; for time seems to have no meaning there.

Kneeling at this shrine, we try to realize the centuries which have elapsed since the tender virgin-saint, the loveliest flower in the martyrology of the Church, was laid here with the same solemn Sacrifice which has honored her feast to-day—that beautiful feast which the Romans love so well! But even the imagination fails in the effort. What a wide, stormy sea of time stretches between that day and this! What billows of human tumult and passion have raged around that Bark which carries the Fisherman of Galilee, and which alone has crossed in safety the mighty gulf where empires and kingdoms, creeds and conquerors, alike have perished!

Among the groups left in the church after the crowd had ebbed away was one composed of three ladies, who were slowly moving from point to point, examining all the details of the interior. One was a handsome, stately woman of middle age; the other two, much younger, were Miss Lorimer and Miss Marriott. Cecil had changed little in the months which had elapsed since she left the Château de Villemur, and which had been spent in pleasant travel through the Tyrol and Austria and Northern Italy. On the statuesque white of her skin there was seldom any bloom of color, and only the clearness of its tint, the brightness of her eye, and the elasticity of her step, showed her perfect health and buoyant spirits.

But Grace Marriott had changed much since her voyage across the Atlantic. To her delicate face a wild-rose color had come; she had gained flesh as well as strength in mountain rambles, and looked altogether a different being from the girl who left the shores of America. At present, however, she had the air of one who is a little cold and a little bored. Pulling her furs

closer around her—and there is no place where furs are more agreeable than in a Roman church—she once or twice suggested departure to her companions, but they were too much absorbed to heed her. The elder lady was pointing out in the church all the features most interesting to antiquarians, and Cecil was listening with rapt attention. Grace Marriott shrugged her shoulders a little as she walked along. Her artistic sense was pleased by the picture which the beautiful interior made. The shafts of light falling through the double range of columns to the marble pavement, the golden lights burning like stars around the tomb of the martyr, the rich blending of color from porphyry and mosaic—these things charmed the eye. But she cared less about the story which they told ; while to Cecil there was interest in every detail which proved the great antiquity of the basilica, a significance in every ancient column, every fragment of old mosaic.

"How can people doubt what the primitive Church was like when they come to Rome!" she said, while they paused near the entrance for a last look before going out. Round the high altar faint wreaths of incense-smoke were still hanging ; its fragrance filled the building, together with the aromatic odor of the green boughs with which, in Roman fashion, the pavement of the church was strewn. Cecil stooped and lifted a spray of box, which she placed in the front of her dress. "I will keep this," she said, "in memory of St. Agnes."

Two ladies who were passing out just before them overheard the words ; and one—a pale, pretty girl—looked at her with a glance so sweet that it was like a smile, although her lips remained grave. The glance

struck Cecil—for no moment is too short for us to receive an impression, good or bad, from the fellow-creature whom we meet therein—and she said to herself, "What a lovely face!" while she wondered when and where she had before seen dark eyes which could smile like these.

When they reached the top of the flight of steps, and emerged from the church, they found the two ladies who had preceded them gazing round rather blankly. Only one carriage was in sight, and that was Miss Lorimer's. As she motioned for the coachman to drive up, she noticed that the girl whose face had interested her looked very white, and heard her companion—an elderly lady—say: "You had better go back into the church, and sit down. I will walk into Rome, and bring a carriage for you."

"Oh, I think that I might walk! It is not very far," said the girl, looking wistfully down the road.

But the other answered decidedly: "No, you must not undertake it. I should only have you fainting on my hands, which would be worse than waiting here—though the church *is* cold. I am sorry we have delayed so long."

"I am shivering now," said the girl. "I will wait here in the sunshine until you send a carriage for me, if you really think you must."

But at this point Cecil, after exchanging a glance with her companions, stepped forward. "Pardon me," she said, addressing the young lady, "but we are driving straight into Rome; and if you will accept a seat in our carriage, we shall be very happy to take you with us. It will be better, I think, than remaining here."

"Thanks! You are very kind," replied the girl, in

a voice as sweet as her eyes ; and then she looked at her companion as if to ask what she must do.

The elder lady—there could be no doubt that she *was* a lady, despite the plainness of her dress and a certain brusqueness of manner—replied to the look by one comprehensive glance at Cecil, after which she said : "We are really very much obliged to you. My daughter is not able to walk into Rome, and our carriage has deserted us. Therefore, since you are so kind, I think she had better go with you."

"I am sure of it," said Cecil. "She looks quite cold. I am sorry," she added, "that I have not another seat to offer—"

"I should not care to accept it if you had," interrupted the other, with the brusqueness of manner already mentioned. "I am a very good pedestrian, and the walk is nothing to me. But for my daughter I am exceedingly obliged. She will give you our address. Good-day !"

She nodded, and walked off toward Rome at a pace which justified her own description of herself as a good pedestrian. Cecil smiled, and said to the young girl : "Come, here is our carriage."

It was a handsome private carriage, and as the young stranger sank back into the luxurious seat she said : "This is indeed better than returning into the cold church to wait and shiver for another hour."

"And what a cold church it is !" said Grace Marriott. "What cold churches they all are, except St. Peter's ! Surely these Romans must have a wonderful fire of piety to keep them warm during their long prayers."

"They are not only very pious, those who are pious

at all," answered the stranger, "but they are not accustomed to luxurious heating arrangements anywhere. Their homes are almost as cold as the churches."

"It certainly is not a place to come for comfort in winter," observed Mrs. Severn. "My experience is that, unless one goes to the tropics, Southern climates are snares and delusions in the matter of warmth in winter. There are times when they are delightful, but again there are times when one suffers keenly from cold."

"But would one put a little discomfort—such as shivering when one enters a marble church which was built to exclude heat, and therefore must be as delightful in summer as it is frigid in winter—in comparison with such a sky, such a sun, such a scene as this?" said Cecil, looking around her. "And who would have missed the function to-day because the grand old basilica was not heated by patent furnaces and registers? That scene, with all its beauty and its poetry, carried one back to ages when such things were unknown, but when people had ardent faith, great purposes, marvellous genius—"

"My dear Cecil, we know all that," interposed Mrs. Severn, laughing softly; "but really it does not prevent one from shivering. Even your enthusiasm cannot always keep you warm."

"I have no enthusiasm at all," Cecil protested, "only a sympathetic perception of things; and when these are great things, I cannot be conscious of small ones. But here we are in Rome"—as they rolled through the Porta Pia—"and if you will give me your address," she continued to the girl before her, "we will take you home at once."

The young lady mentioned an address near the Foro Trajano, and then said, as the carriage turned in that direction : "May I ask to whom I am indebted for so much kindness ?"

"The kindness is not worth mentioning," said Cecil, "but I am very happy to tell you who we are. This lady is Mrs. Severn, our chaperon, guide, philosopher, and friend ; here is Miss Marriott, and I am Miss Lorimer. Perhaps it may be worth while to add that we are Americans."

The dark, sweet eyes rested in turn on each person named. Then their owner said :

"I fancied that you were Americans—from your accent, you know. I am an Irishwoman—Miss Tyrconnel."

"Tyrconnel !" repeated Grace Marriott and Cecil in one breath. They looked at each other, after which Miss Lorimer said :

"Pardon us, but your name recalls a very pleasant acquaintance we made in crossing the ocean. He was a Mr. Tyrconnel, and an Irishman. Is the name common in Ireland ?"

"Not at all," was the reply. "I do not know any family bearing it except our own. It may have been my brother whom you met," she added after an instant's pause. "He returned to Ireland from New Zealand last May."

"And was on board a vessel which had an accident with an iceberg ?"

"Yes ; it delayed his arrival and made us very uneasy. I remember now that he spoke of an American party with whom he enjoyed the voyage very much. Were *you* the party ?"

"Yes," answered Miss Marriott, "I think we may safely say that we were the party ; but such a collective memory is not altogether flattering. I am afraid we have remembered Mr. Tyrconnel better than he has remembered us."

"Oh, no !" said the young lady eagerly. "I assure you that he spoke of you most warmly and said that he owed to you the pleasantest days he had spent for years. Poor Gerald ! he has not had many pleasant ones of late, and he came home to a world of trouble. An Irish landlord has not a bed of roses in these days, you know."

"So he is an Irish landlord !" said Miss Marriott. "He told us very little of himself."

"There was little that was pleasant to tell," replied Miss Tyrconnel, with a sigh. "It was only a sense of duty which brought him back to Ireland ; he did not want to come. It was a most trying position which awaited him, and its trials have not grown less with time. I wish he would give up the struggle and come away, but he will not. It is not in Gerald to surrender what he believes to be a duty ; he will die first."

"Is there any question of his dying ?" asked Cecil.

She was sorry for the question the next moment, when she saw how the girl to whom she had addressed it shrank, and how pale her cheek and lips grew. But she controlled herself, and answered quietly :

"When matters are in the condition in which they now stand in Ireland, there is always a question of what lawless men have done and may do again. But Gerald is very brave and God is good, and I try not to think of terrible possibilities. Understand," she went on quickly, "that I am not speaking of his tenants.

They recognize that he is trying to undo past evils and make things better. But the secret societies—the men who have been led into crime by deep and bitter wrongs —no one who incurs their enmity is safe. But Gerald does not wish me to dwell on these things, and I try not to do so."

The carriage drew up at this moment before the great arched portal of an old palace, and the speaker rose. "This is where we have our apartment," she said. "Cannot I tempt you to enter? No? Well, pray give me your address, that mamma and I may call. I am so very glad to have met you, and I want to cultivate your acquaintance if you will allow me to do so."

"We shall be delighted to cultivate *yours*," said Miss Lorimer, producing her card. "Here is our address. Pray come soon."

Then, with cordial salutations, they parted.

CHAPTER XV.

"MY SON AND I DO NOT AGREE."

"ONE knows that the world is a small place," said Grace Marriott, as the carriage rolled toward the Piazza di Spagna, near which their lodgings were; "but really one is not always prepared for the realization of its extreme smallness, as exemplified by the manner in which we run against acquaintances, and the friends and relatives of acquaintances, in the most unlikely regions. But I am glad to have heard of Mr. Tyrconnel again. I always thought he would reappear somewhere."

"But he has *not* reappeared," said Cecil; "and, according to his sister's account, he is more likely to be shot in Ireland than to appear in Rome."

"Oh, well, one has heard of him, at least!" said Grace; "and one knows where to place him. I hate for anybody whom I have liked to drop out of my life in that mysterious manner. He might have been a conspirator from the mystery he maintained about himself."

"Reticence is not mystery," observed Cecil. "There was no reason why he should have explained his affairs to us. I remember I said so at the time."

"There was no reason, as it appears, why he should not have explained who and what he was. It is rather unfortunate to be an Irish landlord under existing circumstances, but not disgraceful."

"You heard what his sister said—that he came home to a position of difficulty and trial. That made him reserved about it, no doubt. There are people who do not care to talk of painful and disagreeable things."

"His sister resembles him very much," said Grace. "I had almost forgotten his face until hers recalled it."

"She looks very delicate," remarked Mrs. Severn. "But there is something quite attractive about her."

"I was struck with her face in Sant' Agnese," said Cecil. "It has a very peculiar charm. I am afraid I might not have thought of asking her to come with us but for that."

"There is no charm, peculiar or otherwise, about the mother," said Miss Marriott. "I think from her manner she must be an Englishwoman. The Irish are not usually so brusque."

The conversation dropped at this point, for the carriage rolled under the *portone* of their own house—that is, of the house in which they had established themselves for the winter—and alighting, the three ladies passed up a broad staircase to their apartment on the first floor.

It was a very spacious and handsome apartment—such as only a person of wealth could have inhabited, yet not so magnificent as to necessarily argue great wealth. Cecil was very careful to avoid any display which could draw attention to her fortune. The apartment was taken in Mrs. Severn's name, and she paid all bills, appearing altogether as head of the party. This was by Miss Lorimer's special request, made when she agreed to act as chaperon to the two young ladies during a winter in Italy. It was a very agreeable request to the woman, who had never taken such a position

before, and was afraid she might become in the eyes of the world a mere companion. That would have been hard to her ; for she was not only a lady by birth, but she had moved for a long time in a very brilliant social atmosphere, and was widely known. Her husband, a man of letters and of science, and of a social charm more powerful than either, had lived for years in those cities of Europe where cultivated society can best be secured, had himself cultivated this society untiringly, had been esteemed one of the most delightful men of his generation, and when he died was found to have lived so much beyond his income that he left scarcely any fortune at all. His widow, therefore, reduced to very narrow means, made her home in one of those German towns where narrow means are considered to go farther than anywhere else in the world ; and here, through the Marriotts, Miss Lorimer met her. They liked each other at once ; the girl with her quick, eager intellect and the woman with her careful culture found themselves very sympathetic, and soon the idea entered Cecil's mind of going to Rome for the winter, with Mrs. Severn as chaperon and Grace Marriott as companion.

"I think we would make a very nice party," she said to the latter, to whom she spoke first of her plan. "When you remarked not long ago that you would like to spend the winter in Rome, I determined to ask you to do so—as my guest, of course. I had already decided to set up my *Lares* and *Penates* there for that length of time, if I could make any suitable arrangement. The trouble was the question of chaperonage, for we could not defy the proprieties by going alone ; and I have a horror—simply a horror—of entering into

any close association with people with whom I am not thoroughly sympathetic. Now, I have studied Mrs. Severn closely ; the more I see of her the better I like her, and I intend that she shall go with us."

"It is a charming plan," said Miss Marriott. "For myself I can only say that I shall be delighted to go. But I doubt if you can induce Mrs. Severn to accept such a position. Frankly, *I* should not like to ask her to do so."

"I will ask her," said Cecil, "and you shall see that she will accept. I flatter myself that I have a little tact."

She did not add that she had a great deal of something else, though no doubt she relied on it even more than on her tact ; and indeed it was the liberal compensation offered which tempted Mrs. Severn to run the risks involved in accepting the position. Yet so much may be said, that the money would not have tempted her to take charge of any one whom she did not like, or whose social position was not thoroughly unexceptionable. She did like Cecil Lorimer exceedingly, however ; and certainly nothing could have been pleasanter than that young lady's way of putting things.

"Understand that it is to be *your* establishment, dear Mrs. Severn," she said ; "and my name is not to be mentioned in connection with it any more than Miss Marriott's. We are simply two young ladies whom you are kind enough to take charge of. I am selfish in this, you see ; for, whereas I am nobody over here, you are very much somebody, and can make us acquainted I am sure with many charming people. So remember you are to set up your *salon* in Rome ; I am to be allowed to share in the advantages of it, and to supply

the sinews of war as a small compensation. But that is to be strictly our secret. Never whisper to any one that you know or suspect me to have a good deal of money."

"The girl is romantic," thought Mrs. Severn, as Craven had thought before her. Aloud she said: "I think, my dear, that I have sufficient discretion not to betray anything which you would like kept secret. But you must not think that what you have said blinds me to your kindness with regard to myself. You are offering me in the most delicate manner the opportunity to enjoy again for a little while a life which I enjoyed perhaps too much when I possessed it"—here a few tears were wiped away—"but it is an opportunity which I could not accept if I had not—fallen in love with you, I should say if I were not a prosaic old woman."

"Do I not know it?" said Cecil, smiling. "I always know when people like me. And do you suppose I should make such a proposition if I had not fallen in love with you also? Therefore, with such a satisfactory state of feeling between us, I think we can safely set up an establishment together."

So it was that the establishment in Rome became an accomplished fact, and had gone on in the most harmonious manner up to the time when we found the party in Sant' Agnese.

Miss Tyrconnel very soon fulfilled her promise to call. The next day when the ladies came in from their afternoon drive they found her card and that of her mother. "So sorry to have missed you!" was pencilled on the former.

"That is a charming girl," said Miss Marriott. "We must cultivate her for her own sake as well as for her brother's."

"I am at a loss," said Cecil, "to know why we should cultivate her for her brother's sake at all."

"Because we liked him so much," replied Grace. "Is not that a good reason? Perhaps you have forgotten how agreeable he was. But I, who have not met any fascinating Frenchmen in the interval, remember very well."

Cecil laughed. "I also remember Mr. Tyrconnel very well," she remarked; "but if I had no such memory I should wish to see more of his sister. Let us return this visit very soon."

A few days later their carriage again drew up before the dark, massive entrance of the old palace near the Foro Trajano. They were directed to the second floor for the Tyrconnel apartment; and mounting thither the door was opened for them by an Italian servant, who received their cards, and ushered them into a *salon* with a more cheerful aspect than might have been expected—where a bright fire was burning and the air was filled with the fragrance of violets. Only a few minutes elapsed before Miss Tyrconnel entered, and, seen thus without her out-door wraps, both visitors were painfully struck by her fragility of appearance. She was indeed the slightest creature possible to imagine—slenderly built, with very little flesh, and a skin so transparent that it was like fine porcelain. Her face recalled her brother's, as Grace had said, but was a refined and delicate copy of it. The lines of brow, nose, mouth, and chin were exquisitely moulded, while the clear, pale complexion, the dark hair and large dark eyes, were traits in which certain Celts strongly resemble Spaniards.

"I am so very glad to see you!" she said, meeting

her visitors with winning cordiality. "I was disappointed at finding you were out when mamma and I called; but unfortunately that is an accident to be expected if one does not know on what day to call."

"I hope that it will not occur again with you," said Cecil. "Thursday is our day. But we have run the same risk, you see, and have been more fortunate; for we have found you at home."

"I am not very often anywhere else," she answered. "I am something of an invalid—which is the reason we are here—and I go out very little."

"That is a great privation when one is in Rome," said Miss Marriott. "Do you not feel it so?"

The soft, dark eyes looked at her with a smile. "Yes," said Miss Tyrconnel, "it is a privation; but I have so many compensations that I do not think of what I miss so much as of what I gain. Even with limitations, Rome is the most fascinating place in the world."

"You have been here before?" asked Miss Lorimer.

"Oh, yes, often! Therefore, you see, it is not as if I did not already know it well. And I have many friends—real Roman friends—who come to see me and make my life very pleasant. But here is mamma, who was as sorry as I not to find you at home the other day."

"I wanted to thank you again for your kindness to my daughter," said Mrs. Tyrconnel, coming forward to shake hands with Cecil first. "She tells me, too, that you are friends of my son."

"We met Mr. Tyrconnel on shipboard," said Miss Lorimer; "and after having passed through some

danger with him, we felt as if we knew one another very well.''

"And we liked him exceedingly," added Grace Marriott, who thought this statement rather cool. "He was so very kind and pleasant.''

"Oh, yes, he is always that!" said his mother, in a matter-of-course way. "I remember the accident which delayed his return. It was a critical time, and his presence was very much needed—but he was not to blame for the delay.''

Her tone suggested that he might be blamed for other things.

"He was very much worried by it, I think," said Cecil; "but it was one of the cases in life where impatience is of no use. On land, if a journey is interrupted one can find various expedients for getting on—charter a train, if necessary—but at sea nothing of the kind is practicable. One is at the mercy of the waves and the captain.''

"We were all too glad to escape with our lives to be impatient on that occasion," said Grace.

"Yes, it was a narrow escape," observed Mrs. Tyrconnel, absently. Then she looked at her daughter. "Kathleen, have you ordered tea?" she asked.

Miss Tyrconnel responded by ringing the bell. A servant came in with the tea-tray, and soon the fragrant beverage which has become an afternoon necessity was handed in delicate cups of lovely old china, together with plates of small, dainty cakes.

As Cecil drank her tea and trifled with a cake she talked to Mrs. Tyrconnel, who rather excited her interest. Evidently she was a woman of very strong individuality. Her appearance denoted this unmistakably.

It was not from her that either son or daughter had inherited his or her classical delicacy of feature or dreamy softness of eye. Her face was strongly cut, though not unhandsome ; her dark eyes were full of fire, and her whole expression and aspect breathed passionate feeling and imperious will. What, then, was the meaning of the coldness and hardness with regard to her son which her tone and manner betrayed ? Cecil remembered enough about him to feel sure that he was not one to provoke antagonism causelessly, and she was conscious of a curiosity which led her to turn the conversation to the subject of Ireland.

"It is a country," she said, "which I have always regarded with great interest, and which I should like to visit, but I fear that this is not a good time to see it."

"If you want to see the lakes and the mountains and the ruins—and that, I suppose, is what you mean by Ireland—this is as good a time as any other," answered Mrs. Tyrconnel. "There are people who fancy that it is dangerous to go into Ireland, but this is a great mistake. Strangers are in no danger at all ; it is only those who belong to the soil and have lived on it for generations who are liable to be assassinated, because they will not yield their just rights."

"Indeed !" said Cecil, politely and vaguely. She found that the fire was very near the surface, and that she had no difficulty in rousing it. "One hears a great deal of the wrongs and sufferings of the tenantry," she went on after an instant ; "but no doubt it is a very trying position, that of an Irish landlord."

"So trying," said Mrs. Tyrconnel, "that our best efforts are treated with ingratitude ; and at the least attempt to exact one's own, one is practically reduced

to a state of siege, and liable at any moment to be shot."

"Oh!" cried Cecil. The exclamation escaped her involuntarily, and she put down her cup of tea rather abruptly. "How miserable you must be, then, to think of your son!" she said, quickly.

Was it her fancy that Mrs. Tyrconnel's lip curled a little scornfully? "Gerald is not likely to be in danger," she said, coldly. "He is not strong enough to defy the peasants and the demagogues who are controlling them. He is paltering with them, yielding rights which he ought to defend with his last breath, squandering his inheritance in socialistic experiments—my son and I do not agree on these questions, Miss Lorimer," she added, brought suddenly to a realization of how strangely what she was saying must sound by the startled expression of Cecil's face. "He has chosen to cut loose from all the traditions of his class and his family, and to enter on new paths which I totally disapprove. Consequently I have left Ireland, and I may never go back. The climate does not suit Kathleen, and she has suffered terribly from the nervous tension of the last few years. She is better away from there."

"I cannot admit that, mamma," said Kathleen, gently. While talking to Miss Marriott, she had plainly been listening with one ear to her mother's conversation. "I can never agree that any place is better for me than Ireland."

"You are a foolish girl, then," said her mother; "and other people must be wiser for you than you are for yourself."

Her whole tone and manner changed, however, as

she said these words. It was evident that if her son roused the hardness of her nature, her daughter brought out all its softness. There was a glimpse of family complications in these accidental revelations, which seemed to give Cecil the *mot de l'enigme* of much that she remembered in Tyrconnel. Had he not hinted at some hard, unwelcome task which awaited him—a task in which duty might be arrayed against the tenderest susceptibilities of others? She recalled the very words in which he had spoken, and how she had seen the sensitive fibre of the man shrink from the responsibility of the burden and its pain. A glimpse of both had been given her, and she felt saddened—she hardly knew why—as she rose to take leave.

CHAPTER XVI.

"HE COULD NOT YIELD."

IT was on one of the Thursdays when Cecil had said that they were always at home that she saw the Tyrconnels next. The large, handsome *salon* was well filled when the mother and daughter entered ; for Mrs. Severn had many friends of many nationalities, and numbers of them had found her out in her pleasant quarters. There was a murmur of conversation on the air ; but as the names of the newcomers were announced, Cecil detached herself from a group of which she seemed to be the centre, and came forward to welcome them—to find a seat near the fire for the delicate girl, who looked like a pale flower in her furs, and to present Mrs. Tyrconnel to Mrs. Severn. Then, leaving the elder ladies together, she came back and sat down by Kathleen.

"This is very good of you," said the latter, smiling, "since I see that so many people are anxious to engross you"—there had been several attempts to detain Miss Lorimer on her way across the room. "But I am glad that you can spare me a few minutes ; for I want to tell you that I have had a letter from Gerald to-day, and he is so pleased that I have met you, and begs to be remembered to you, since you are kind enough to recollect him."

"We must have made a much slighter impression on

Mr. Tyrconnel than he made upon us, if he fancied that we were likely to forget him in such a short interval of time," said Cecil. "I hope that he is well."

"He does not say that he is not," answered the girl, a little sadly; "but I know that he cannot be very well when he is so much troubled. And the worst of it is that for fear of troubling *me* he says little or nothing of what he is doing and feeling. Ah,"—she sighed—"I would give so much if I could be with him!—if I had not been obliged to leave Ireland this winter!"

"But your health made it necessary, I suppose," said Cecil.

The dark eyes looked at her with something pathetic in their expression. "I am never very strong," was the reply; "but my health is no worse in Ireland than here. There were other reasons, which seemed to make it necessary." She paused a moment, then added with quick wistfulness, "I heard mamma talking to you of Gerald the other day, and I fear that she (unintentionally, of course) may have given you a wrong impression about him. You know, when people differ very widely in opinion it is hard for them to understand one another, and hard for some natures to be patient with what they do not understand."

"Yes, I know," said Cecil. "It has always seemed to me that sympathy—the sympathy which comprehends, and tolerates because comprehending, even that which it does not agree with or approve—is the rarest thing in the world. And the lack of it makes half the misery of life."

"I am sure of that," answered Kathleen. "I have seen so much of it—so much of the intolerance which wants to crush all that is opposed to it, and will not

even believe in the good intentions of others. It was that which drove my brother from home. He could not be neutral—no man who *is* a man can be so in Ireland now—and the result was bitterness of feeling between my uncle, my mother, and himself. It made things very hard on both sides, and so Gerald went away. He was our uncle's heir, however ; and when he died Gerald was forced to come back—to find mamma as much opposed to him as ever.''

"I can realize how difficult the position must have been," said Cecil—and indeed her sympathy saw, felt, and understood it all. "A hard nature does not feel these things," she went on. "Even if it does not enjoy opposing others—and some people positively *do* enjoy opposition—such a nature is so intent on what it believes to be best that it has no heed for the opinions or feelings of others. But for a sensitive nature—one that has the finer sentiments of consideration and sympathy—to be forced into opposing those whom it would like to shield from pain, there can be nothing harder laid on one in the name of duty.''

"How well you understand !" said Kathleen, looking at her with eyes full of surprise and admiration. "That is just how it is with Gerald. To do what is disagreeable or painful to others always costs him more than to make any sacrifice of his own wishes. But you know there was a duty involved to others as well as to himself—he *could not* yield.''

"Yes," replied Cecil. She was eager to ask the nature of this duty, and how he was fulfilling it, but her quick eye saw that she was needed elsewhere, and she knew that she must defer the further unfolding of the Tyrconnel problem to a more convenient season.

"I am sorry," she said to her companion, "that I am forced to go now ; yonder are some people to whom I *must* talk. But you will let me introduce some of our friends to you. There is one whom I think you will like. He is quite a talented young artist—one of Grace's special friends." She beckoned as she spoke to a young man, who caught her gesture, and came forward from the other side of the fireplace, where he had been watching herself and Miss Tyrconnel, while languidly joining now and then in the conversation of a group near by.

"Are you really going to recognize me at last?" he asked, as he crossed the hearth rug with quite a change of manner and expression. "I began to think I was to get nothing but a nod from afar."

"Oh, I have a great deal to say to you presently, but just now I called you over to take my place!" answered Cecil, smiling. "Miss Tyrconnel, let me present Mr. Erle."

"It is a very difficult task Miss Lorimer gives me—that of taking her place," observed the young man, as he obediently sank into the seat which Cecil had vacated. "And it is made more difficult by the fact that you seemed both so interested in what you were saying ; I have been observing you for ten minutes."

"Yes, we were interested," said the pale, pretty Irish girl ; "but I do not think it can be hard to interest Miss Lorimer, she is so frank, so sympathetic, she comprehends so easily things which most people do not comprehend at all."

"She is a splendid creature," said the young man, with a good deal of enthusiasm, "and intellectually very stimulating ; but her sympathy has limitations."

"Have we not all limitations?" asked Kathleen. "Has not every one *les défauts de ses qualités?*"

"Naturally," was the reply; "but you spoke of sympathy as Miss Lorimer's dominant quality, and I spoke of its limitations—not of its betraying her into weakness, as one's dominant qualities usually do. With regard to some things she is not sympathetic at all."

"I am sure they must be unworthy things, then," said Cecil's new friend. "I cannot believe that anything noble would ever find her insensible to its influence."

"That is just it," answered the other. "She is sometimes a little intolerant of things which she thinks are not noble—or, if not intolerant, at least thoroughly unsympathetic."

"I am glad you have modified your term," said Miss Tyrconnel. "Intolerant I am certain she could never be, but we are all unsympathetic toward things which we do not like."

"Yes," assented Mr. Erle, "but one expects more from some people than from the generality of the world. They give so much that one looks for them to give all. That is how it is with Miss Lorimer."

Kathleen smiled. "If I may ask," she said, "what are the things in which you have found her unsympathetic?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "Oh, toward some ideals of conduct, some standards of opinion! The moral strain is just a little too strong in her. A certain rigidity always goes with that, you know. For example, she thinks more of the utilitarian element in life than of art and beauty."

"I see!" said Miss Tyrconnel, amused. "I am afraid you belong to the school that would not allow much of the utilitarian in life at all. Do you not think that there may be some limitations to *your* sympathy?"

An answering gleam of amusement came into his languid gray eyes. "I have no doubt of it," he answered. "We are all limited more or less, as you reminded me a moment ago. But do not understand me," he added a little hastily, "as criticising Miss Lorimer. No one admires her more than I do. She impresses me like a fine piece of classic sculpture—as made for noble uses altogether."

"It is in that manner exactly that she impresses me," said Kathleen.

"Have you known her long?" asked the young man, a little curiously.

She shook her head. "No; this is only the third time I have met her. But I think what Madame Swetchine says is true—that 'we only know those perfectly whom we divine at first sight.'"

"Yes, that is true, I think," said her companion, meditatively. "At least I am seldom deceived in my first impression—when I receive one. There are not many people capable of giving one, however."

He longed to add, "You have given me one," but it was impossible to venture on such a personal remark. With all her gentleness, Miss Tyrconnel had an air of dignity which no one could mistake, least of all Lionel Erle, with his delicate, trained perceptions. He led the conversation, therefore, away from the dangerous ground toward which it was verging; and, since they both knew Rome well, there was no lack of matter for talk between them. There was something very attrac-

tive about the young man—under his affectations an almost boyish enthusiasm breaking out now and then, a quick response to anything noble in fact or suggestion ; in short, that unconscious charm of the many-sided artistic nature, which no worldly training can wholly disguise. Those who had known him in the days when he had bent before the charms of Prince Waldegrave's beautiful daughter, found a great change in him ; but in reality it was a very superficial change. Under the languid indifference of the man of the world, the same ardent, uncalculating disposition was to be found by those who knew him well.

Kathleen thought him very pleasant ; for her own simplicity made it absolutely necessary for those who met her on any familiar ground to be simple also. They were talking quite animatedly when Grace Marriott came up to them.

"How do you do, Miss Tyrconnel !" she said. "I have been trying to get over here to speak to you ever since you entered the room. Is it not strange that the people one wants to see always come at the same time ? Mrs. Severn certainly has an army of friends, and Cecil and I have to do duty in entertaining them. Some repay one, others—do not. But one must take the social chaff and wheat together, I suppose."

"That is a view from which I dissent entirely," said Erle. "I never take mine together, if I can possibly separate them."

"But it is not often possible," observed Miss Tyrconnel ; "at least not without selfishness and sometimes rudeness. One owes a debt of courtesy even to the tiresome, you know."

"Pardon me," he answered, "but I do not know

anything of the kind. It opens such very unpleasant vistas. How can I tell, for example, that you are not merely tolerating me from a mistaken sense of social duty at present ?"

"There is nothing more likely," said Miss Marriott, with a laugh. "You had better go, therefore, and answer the summons which Alice Lyndon's eyes have been sending over here for the last ten minutes. You will be quite certain of not boring *her*."

"You forget that there might be something of the kind on the other side," he answered. "But in order to relieve Miss Tyrconnel—"

He bowed and went away laughing, while Kathleen was still protesting against such an interpretation of her words.

"He has many charming qualities," said Grace, looking after him, "and great artistic talent ; but I am afraid that he will never accomplish much. He has not sufficient incentive for exertion. It is a pity sometimes to have too much of this world's goods."

"It is often very much of a pity," answered Miss Tyrconnel. "It can stifle spiritual as well as artistic life. But yonder is mamma beckoning, and I must go. First, though, let me say that I should like to see something of your work, Miss Marriott. You know you told me that you are an artist."

"A student of art—which is quite a different thing," said Grace. "I have no work worth showing ; but if you are interested in art, how would you like to visit some of the studios ? In a few of them there is very good work being done, and I know most of the artists."

"I should be delighted. There is nothing I would like better."

"Then we will arrange it as soon as possible. Cecil or I will let you know what day we can go, and if it suits you we will see what modern art has to say for itself in this home of ancient art."

CHAPTER XVII.

"I WANT SOMETHING."

"IT strikes me," said Cecil, "that modern art is almost an impertinence in Rome." She uttered this remark in a thoughtful tone as a party, consisting of Mrs. Severn, Miss Marriott, Miss Tyrconnel, and herself were driving up the winding road which leads to the Pincian, after several hours spent among the studios of the most noted artists in Rome.

"My dear Cecil!" exclaimed Grace. "Is that the impression which the work we have been looking at makes upon you?"

"My dear Grace, don't be shocked," replied Cecil. "I know that some of it is very good work; those Campagna studies of R——, for instance, are admirable. But it all has a certain rawness of tone to eyes that have been gazing for months at the mellow tints of the masters. And, then, the triviality of the subjects! Will art never again find an inspiration worthy of it? I never enter an exhibition of modern paintings (and what we have seen this afternoon has impressed me in the same way) without feeling it a pity that genius and training—the long, laborious training of the artist—should be wasted on such subjects as one generally sees."

Miss Tyrconnel looked at the speaker with a gleam of responsive comprehension in her eyes. "I, too,

have often felt that," she said. "Except those who devote themselves to the study of nature, modern artists seem to have no inspiration worthy of art, one might say."

"Well, of course there is a lack of great subjects," remarked Mrs. Severn. "But where could they go to find them? Art is like literature—hopelessly stranded on the commonplace, and only trying to depict that as truthfully as possible."

"You are all very unjust," said Grace; "for where art in the Middle Ages had only one great field of expression, art has now a thousand fields; for 'nothing that is human is alien to it.'"

"That is just it," observed Miss Tyrconnel, in a low tone. "It is all so distressingly human that seldom if ever do we catch a gleam of the divine."

"Modern art does not recognize the divine," said Mrs. Severn. "There must be faith behind work to make it effective, and our artists, like our writers, are filled with the spirit of their time—the spirit which has descended from God to man."

"The spirit which aims to paint for men the life of their kind," said Grace.

"But what a life!" exclaimed Cecil. "It is either hopelessly trivial or more hopelessly sad. Greek tragedy is not more terrible than the face of human life as modern art, whether painted or written, shows it to us—without a hope or a meaning behind its struggle and its suffering."

"You forget nature," said Grace. "We owe all study and interpretation of *that* to modern art."

"Yes, and for that, I confess, we owe it a boundless debt," answered Cecil. "But for the training of mod-

ern art we might not be able to recognize all the elements of beauty in this scene," she added, as they drove up to the Piazzale, and saw outspread before them that wondrous panorama of Rome—the Campagna and the mountains—which has no equal in the world.

And it was just then the moment when this picture is most beautiful. Behind St. Peter's the sun was going down in a sea of gold, against which the vast outlines of the dome—" that work of man which alone has something of the grandeur of the works of God"—stood in majestic relief ; while a flood of radiance gilded the figure of the angel on the Castle of San Angelo, and a soft, luminous mist lay over the city, with its palaces, domes, and towers. The sky was of exquisite color—tender, lucid, radiant where it touched the azure heights that bounded the horizon.

" Could anything be more beautiful ?" said Cecil, with a soft sigh. " And what a spell, what a charm in the soft beauty ! One feels nothing like it anywhere else."

" There is but one Rome," observed Kathleen. " Modern Goths and Vandals are trying to destroy it, but they cannot succeed as long as *that* stands"—and she pointed to the marvellous dome of the Leonine city.

" Can one fancy Rome without it ?" said Cecil. " All history for a thousand years centres there. One must be blind, deaf, stupid beyond comparison not to know and feel it. I sometimes think that I should like to see the man who is the inheritor of such a majestic tradition," she added slowly ; " but then, again, I am afraid—"

" Of what ?" asked Kathleen, as she paused.

" Of having an ideal destroyed. It is such a marvel-

lous position that it seems to me a man would have to be specially created in order to fill it worthily. Just think of all that he embodies, of all that he must carry of power and influence ! He alone of all men declares to the world that he is the Vicar of Christ ; he alone claims to speak infallibly by the direct inspiration of the Holy Ghost ; he alone is the head and ruler of that ancient Church which formed the modern world, and to him alone were given the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven—No ; if one thinks of all these things, one dare not see the man who claims such an august and unique position !"

"Have more courage," said Miss Tyrconnel, smiling. "Come and see the Holy Father. I think I can safely promise that you will not be disappointed."

Cecil shook her head. "No one can guarantee me against that," she answered. "I know my own capacities for disappointment too well."

"I have no doubt they are very great," thought Kathleen, struck by the words.

But before she could speak Cecil suddenly uttered an exclamation and leaned forward. "Surely," she said to Mrs. Severn, "I cannot be mistaken—is not that gentleman yonder Mr. Craven ?"

"Where ?" asked Mrs. Severn, looking around rather vaguely—which, considering the number of men in sight, was not surprising.

But Cecil was spared the attempt to indicate ; for the man in question, who for some time had been observing the occupants of the carriage with the scrutinizing attention of a near-sighted person, now crossed the road deliberately and came up to them, proving to be indeed no other than Craven himself.

Mrs. Severn—who was an old friend of his—and Miss Lorimer greeted him warmly ; he was presented to the others, and then, leaning against the carriage, he said to Cecil :

"This is an unexpected as well as a very agreeable surprise. I had no idea of meeting you here. I fancied you in Germany."

"Cannot other people travel as well as yourself ?" she asked, smiling. "I think I left *you* in France."

"Yes," he replied, significantly, "and some others also. Things were dull at Villemur after you left. I did not remain very long. By the way, I saw Madame de Vérac the other day in Paris, and she made many inquiries about you. I was sorry that, having even less knowledge than herself, I could not answer any of them."

"I have not written to her for a long time," said Cecil. "I suppose I ought to do so. But I exhaust myself in answering the inquiries of Nellie and Jack. Nothing that I can say seems to disabuse their minds of the apprehension that I shall certainly get into mischief. Honestly, Mr. Craven, has not Jack been writing to you and asking you to keep an eye on me ?"

"If he has," said Craven, "it was because he did not know what an excellent eye you had already upon you" —he bowed to Mrs. Severn.

"I am at a loss to imagine why Miss Lorimer should be supposed to need an eye upon her at all," said that lady. "I have found her discretion personified."

"Tell Jack that when you write," said Cecil to Craven, with a laugh.

A few more words were exchanged ; then, as the sun sank and the air grew chill, they parted, with a promise

on Craven's part to see them soon; and the ladies drove downward into the city.

"You will come in and take a cup of tea with us?" said Mrs. Severn, turning to Miss Tyrconnel as the carriage drew up at their archway.

"No, thanks," she answered; "not this afternoon. If you will kindly let the carriage drop me at the Church of the Trinità de' Monti, there will be no need to detain it longer."

"But yes," interposed Cecil quickly, "there will be need to detain it until you are ready to be driven home. May I go with you to the church?" she added impulsively. "Or are you going on some private matter?"

"Come by all means," answered Kathleen. "I am only going to Benediction."

"I am very fond of Catholic ceremonies of worship," Cecil explained as they drove toward the church. "They are so poetic, so beautiful, so fully in accord with the doctrines taught. I like to go to them, although of course I do not understand all the symbolism."

"It is very easily understood," said Miss Tyrconnel. She hesitated for an instant, then added: "You are, I suppose, a Protestant?"

"Am I?" said Cecil thoughtfully. "I don't know. It seems a very poor thing to be—one who merely protests. I would rather affirm. But in the sense that I am not a Catholic, and that my immediate forefathers were Protestants, I suppose I might be called one."

The religious Irish girl hardly knew whether to be amused or shocked at her tone. "Have you really no faith of your own?" she asked.

"I have never felt equal to formulating one," Cecil

answered ; "although nothing is more common, I believe. Half the people I know have made up a creed to suit themselves, but I cannot have faith enough in my own infallibility to accomplish anything of the kind. In knowledge of God I want something more certain than the mere opinions of myself or any one else."

"Then why are you not a Catholic?" asked the other quickly.

"Why not?" repeated Cecil. She seemed asking the question of herself, and after a moment she answered : "Because I have never had an impulse of conviction and feeling strong enough to make me one. This seems strange to you, no doubt. I cannot expect you or any other Catholic to understand it. I have had moments of something like illumination, when I seemed to see a great harmonious whole of faith and worship ; but those moments passed, and neither my mind nor my heart was roused sufficiently to think of doing anything. Yet I want something ; do you know what it is?"

"Perfectly," answered Kathleen. "It is instruction."

They both laughed, and as the carriage stopped at this moment there was not time for more words. They descended and entered the church, which was well filled, but lighted only by the brilliant radiance of the altar. As they went in there was a pause in the services —what had gone before Cecil did not know—then a chorus of sweet voices began to sing ; the tabernacle door swung open ; the jewelled monstrance holding the spotless Host and flashing a thousand rays of light was lifted to its throne, while priest and people prostrated themselves before it. Miss Tyrconnel was pleased to see that Cecil knelt. She gave her one sweet

glance, and then, lifting her eyes to the "saving Victim," became absorbed in her own devotion. Cecil, looking at her now and then, thought she had the air of one who is rapt away from the world of sense. Her face, her whole attitude, breathed only adoration and entreaty. "What would I not give for faith like that!" thought the observer with something like a pang. She, too, lifted her eyes. And what was it that she saw amid the jewels and lights and flowers—only a white wafer or the Body of the Lord? What was it the voices were singing now?—

> Præstet fides supplementum
> Sensuum defectui.

The words struck on her listening ear like a message; she covered her face with her hands, as if dazzled by sudden light. For a moment faith *did* supply the defects of sense. She realized, as she had realized once or twice before, what those around her believed; but even then she said to herself, "It will not last."

When they were in the carriage again she said to her companion: "I never suspected myself of being emotional in the least until I entered Catholic churches. But they have an effect on me which has surprised myself. When I am there—especially when I am under the influence of that strange Presence which seems to dwell on your altars—I feel and believe things which I do not feel and believe elsewhere. How can one account for that except on the ground of being easily influenced through the emotions?"

"*I* should account for it," answered Miss Tyrconnel, "in a very different way. I should say that faith, which is a pure gift of God, is knocking at your heart, but

that your mind fights against it. You have no intellectual conviction; you have never, probably, heard a reason why we should believe the truths of faith."

"Oh, yes, I have!" Cecil replied. "In Paris I heard many of the great preachers, and intellectually I never enjoyed anything more."

"Perhaps there was too much of the intellect in it," said Kathleen. "I think you need a special treatment. Will you come some day and let me present you to a man who is not a great preacher, but who has a peculiar gift of winning souls to God? You need not hesitate to see him. He will urge nothing on you."

"Why should you think I would hesitate?" asked Cecil, with surprise. "I am not afraid to hear and be convinced, if that be possible. On the contrary, if your friend can convert me, I am at his service. I shall certainly come. Could such a state of feeling as I had in that church be made lasting with me, I should feel as if wings had been given to bear me over the world."

CHAPTER XVIII.

"COME AND SEE."

WHEN Craven saw Cecil again, he told her that the marriage of the young Comte de Vérac with Mademoiselle de Mirécourt had been arranged, and was to take place in the spring.

"There was a period of despair over your loss, in which he was quite refractory," he said; "but the Vicomtesse managed him admirably. He was finally brought to hear reason, but I sincerely hope that he may never learn all that was involved in the loss."

"So do I," she answered, "if it would give him a moment of unnecessary bitterness. There is nothing for him to regret, however, in his own conduct. I understood his position perfectly, and he could have gained nothing by acting differently."

"That of course will always be a doubt in his mind should he learn what was withheld from him. He will think then, 'Had I boldly put my fate to the touch, I might have won.'"

She shook her head. "No," she said, as firmly as if she were answering M. de Vérac himself, "he would not have won. If I ever doubted that for a moment, I was sure of it when I went away. One sees things in better perspective from a distance, you know."

"The fascination of Villemur was less apparent, no doubt," answered Craven, smiling. "I may be allowed

to say that, since you resisted it so bravely on the spot. And now tell me what are you doing here? You are certainly settled very charmingly, and my old friend Mrs. Severn is a chaperon who leaves nothing to be desired. Even Jack would be satisfied with your *entourage*, I think."

"He asked you to report upon it, I am sure," she said, with a laugh. "Is it not rather surprising that he and Nellie have such a deeply rooted distrust of my ability to conduct myself? Because I do not spend money exactly as every one else does, and have perhaps let fall one or two hints of how I should like to spend it, they think me capable of anything wild, wilful, and visionary."

"It is the penalty one must always pay for a little originality, a little unlikeness to the vast mass of one's fellow-creatures," answered Craven, shrugging his shoulders. "But you must allow me to remark that if Mr. and Mrs. Bernard are anxious concerning you, *I* am very curious. I, too, have my fears and doubts as to the success of your great ideas."

"So have I," she said frankly; "and therefore, as you perceive, they remain ideas and have not become facts. But here comes Grace just in time to entertain you, for I have an engagement with Miss Tyrconnel this afternoon."

"You should not have allowed me to detain you for a moment," observed Craven, rising to shake hands with Miss Marriott. He had already been very much struck by the young artist, and was not sorry for an opportunity to cultivate her acquaintance.

Leaving them talking amicably over their cups of tea, Miss Lorimer went to keep an engagement which

she now began a little to regret. It had been under an impulse that she had said to Kathleen that if the state of feeling she had known in the church could be made lasting with her, she was ready to present herself as a subject for conversion. Now the impulse had vanished, the glow of feeling was partially forgotten, and a sense of reluctance to "commit herself"—that shrinking from conviction as from the imposing of a yoke of possibly painful duty—came over her, as it comes over many of those without the Church, who are drawn toward it by a mysterious attraction, yet held back by a reluctance they are often unable to define. But she had promised to go on this particular afternoon to meet the priest whom Kathleen wished her to see. "He is half French, half Irish, which makes a delightful whole," the latter had said; "and he has lived for years in Rome. I know you will like him."

That she should like him was quite possible, Cecil knew; for she had already met several Roman ecclesiastics, who had delighted her; but to meet such men on a purely social ground was one thing, and to be presented to one of them as a subject for proselytism was quite another. It had been many days since she had felt so much "out of sorts" with herself as when she descended from her carriage at the foot of the stairs leading to the Tyrconnel apartment. "Do I look like an 'anxious inquirer,' I wonder?" she said to herself as she slowly mounted upward.

But when she entered the *salon* of the Tyrconnels she forgot to consider anything about herself, so pleasant were the aspect and social atmosphere of the room. Round the fire were assembled a group consisting of two or three ladies, an elderly man whom a glance

showed to be a priest, Mrs. Tyrconnel and Kathleen, while a low murmur of voices and laughter met the ear with a soft rush of sound when the door opened.

As Miss Lorimer came forward, with her striking presence, every one looked at her ; the ladies put up their eyeglasses, and a quick glance was exchanged between the ecclesiastic and Kathleen. Mrs. Tyrconnel received her cordially, and presented her to Lady Somebody and the Contessa Somebody else—neither name was heeded by Miss Lorimer, although she hardly needed the titles to assure her of the social rank of their bearers. Then Kathleen claimed her, carried her over to her corner of the fireplace, and introduced the Abbé Ravoux—" my special friend of whom I told you," she said to Miss Lorimer.

The Abbé bowed with the grace of a courtier, although it was only his manners which were courtly. In figure he was small almost to insignificance, and people were apt to think him plain until they caught the light of his eye and the sweetness of his smile. He smiled now as he looked at Kathleen.

" It is very good of her to speak of me as her special friend when she has so many," he said to Miss Lorimer. " I hope that I am not insensible to the distinction."

" Miss Tyrconnel can never have much trouble in making friends," said Cecil. " If I may judge by myself, she gives a glance and that is enough."

" And how is it with yourself ?" asked Kathleen, laying her hand with a caressing motion on that of the speaker. " Is not a glance sufficient with you also ? I am sure it has proved so in more cases than mine. Is it not a little singular, M. l'Abbé, that I should have met Miss Lorimer by the merest chance, and received a

kindness from her which led to our acquaintance, without knowing that she was the lady with whom my brother crossed the ocean, and about whom he had talked to me so much ?"

"There are many things which in our shortsightedness we call chance that are not chance at all," answered the Abbé. "You cannot tell how much you and Miss Lorimer are destined to influence each other. She may have crossed the ocean and you may have left Ireland for that meeting at Sant' Agnese."

The eyes of the two girls sought each other with something magnetic in their glance. "If so," said Cecil, involuntarily, "I know from whom the good will come."

"No, you do not know," replied the Abbé. "Good sometimes comes from sources which we think very unlikely. But in this case I have no doubt it will be reciprocal," he added, with one of his charming smiles.

"I really do not see," said Cecil, with a touch of humility which was very sincere, but which sat strangely upon her, "how any possible good can come to Miss Tyrconnel from *me*, but I am willing to admit the possibility of any amount from *her*."

"I have already said that you cannot tell," rejoined the Abbé before Kathleen could utter her disclaimer. "You will do her good, for one thing, if you give her an opportunity to help you toward a comprehension of this world which lies around you, and which must be a very strange world to you."

"Not so strange, perhaps, as you think," said Miss Lorimer. "Since I have been here I have realized how it is that in Rome no one is a foreigner. There is something so universal in the spirit which fills these vast

basilicas! They seem made for nothing less than humanity."

The Abbé looked at her with a glance which Kathleen knew meant sympathy and approval. "It is well," he answered, "that you are able to feel these things—very well for yourself. Many of those who have been brought up in alien traditions are unable to feel them. And nothing can be more sad than the narrow and distorted views which even some of the most intelligent people entertain. Human history has no meaning for them, for here is its centre. They miss all the grandeur of that great conception of Christendom which made the Vicar of Christ reigning in this Eternal City the key-stone of its majestic arch. If they know that from Rome went forth the spirit which made the modern world, the fact seems to tell them nothing. The past has no voice for them, and the present no meaning. They do not feel what you have so well expressed in saying that no one can be a foreigner in Rome who does not alienate himself."

"Yet there would be no Rome without the Holy Father," remarked Kathleen, in a tone of soft reproach; "and Miss Lorimer does not wish to see him."

"But I told you why not," said Cecil. "It is because the conception is so great that I fear to see it inadequately realized. It is impossible, you know," she added, addressing the Abbé, "that any man could realize fully the ideal of the Vicar of Christ."

"To that," answered the Abbé quietly, "I can only reply, 'Come and see.' I was saying to Miss Tyrconnel before you entered that I can obtain a place for her in a party of ladies who are to be presented to the Holy Father to-morrow, if she desires it."

"And I said," added Miss Tyrconnel, "that I would desire it especially, if I could persuade you to accompany us."

Cecil hesitated for an instant, but only for an instant; then she smiled brightly. "How can I resist," she said, "when you are so kind? And really I think I should like to go very much if it were not for fearing the loss of an ideal."

"You will not lose it," replied the Abbé, with the same quietness. "I promise you that."

"Did I not tell you so?" said Kathleen. "I am so glad you have consented to go! Shall mamma and I call for you on our way to the Vatican to-morrow?"

"If you will be so good," Cecil answered. "And pray tell me exactly what to wear."

"A black dress, and a black lace mantle on your head—that is all. Going to the Vatican will make me think so much of Gerald," she continued, looking at the Abbé. "He was with us when we went last. It was just before he left home."

The Abbé nodded. "I remember," he said. "*Apropos*, tell me how he is getting on. He has undertaken a great deal, but he has a brave heart to carry it out."

Kathleen cast a quick glance across at her mother, and lowered her voice as she replied: "He writes to me that he is of late somewhat encouraged. It was terribly up-hill work for a time, you know. He found it so hard to win the confidence of the people. They had been so estranged by the old policy; and when he changed, they fancied at first that it was only from fear. They thought that until he had to defy some of the desperate ones. Since then they have begun to

understand him. But it seems hard that while *they* do there is one who will not."

It did not need another glance at her mother to tell who was in her thoughts.

"These things cannot be helped," said the Abbé kindly. "Life would be too easy for us if even the good that we try to do were not misunderstood—often by the people whose disapproval hurts us most. That is the cross in the work ; else it would be too agreeable to have the pleasure of doing so much good as your brother surely will."

"As he surely hopes to do," replied Kathleen, but she spoke a little sadly. "There are many things to hinder him. Old abuses cannot be reformed in a day. I wish that I were there to help him ; for I could help ; the people know me better than they know him."

"Patience," observed the amiable Abbé. "Your time will come ; and meanwhile you can help him here as well as there. Remember that there is an angel of prayer as well as an angel of works."

CHAPTER XIX.

AT THE FEET OF THE VICAR OF CHRIST.

IT was with a sense of tremulous expectation which surprised herself that Cecil waited, the next day, for the arrival of the Tyrconnels to go to the Vatican. She had spoken truly in saying that she shrank from seeing the Holy Father for fear he might not fulfil the exalted ideal which her imagination had formed of his office and of himself ; yet she was conscious also of a strong attraction drawing her toward him. It was as if some great need of her nature was awake and hoping to find a response in "those fatherly hands whence blessings flow."

She was so full of the thought that she had no attention to spare for her own reflection in the large mirrors of the *salon*, as she paced to and fro in her black lace draperies. But Lionel Erle, who came in unexpectedly, and, as was often his habit, at an unconventional hour, uttered an exclamation of artistic delight when he saw her.

"By Jove," he said, "you must really let me paint you in that dress ! I never saw anything so becoming. But why—oh, I know, of course ! You are going to the Vatican."

"Yes," answered Cecil, smiling, "with Mrs. and Miss Tyrconnel. Should you like to go ?"

"Very much—if only to study you in that costume.

And Miss Tyrconnel will be worth seeing also. What a Spanish look she has! It is astonishing how many Irish faces are of the Iberian type. I find her very charming."

"Who could find her otherwise? She is lovely in all respects."

"Why did not you and Miss Marriott bring her to my studio?" he asked, in a tone of injury. "I heard of you in several *ateliers*, but I was not thought worthy of a visit."

"Well, you know," was the quiet reply, "we were showing her pictures and not bric-à-brac. If it had been the latter we should certainly have gone to you."

"How outrageous and insulting!" he said, but he could not forbear laughing. "And you are mistaken, too. I have a few pictures on hand. One I have been painting at with tolerable steadiness lately, and I should like you to see it. Will you not come some afternoon, bring Miss Tyrconnel, and take tea with me?"

"I have no objection if Mrs. Severn and Grace have none. You can arrange the matter with them."

"And Miss Tyrconnel—will you arrange it with her?"

"I will endeavor to do so. Yes, Giacomo" (as a servant entered and announced the waiting carriage); "I am coming."

She turned, and taking up a pearl rosary from a table near by, slipped it on her wrist.

"That gives the last picturesque touch to your appearance," said Erle, who was watching her admiringly. "I suppose you are taking that to be blessed for some Catholic friend."

"Perhaps so," she answered, as she moved toward

the door. Then she paused abruptly. "No," she added; "I am taking it to be blessed for myself. I don't know why I should hesitate to say so."

"I am sure I don't," he rejoined, candidly. "I have an immense admiration and respect for the Santo Padre myself. If I could, I would give him back his temporal power to-morrow, if only to save what remains of the picturesque and the venerable in Rome. Art owes an immense debt to the Vatican, and I for one never fail to pay it in the homage of my gratitude and respect. Present those sentiments for me to His Holiness."

He said the last words laughingly as they reached the carriage waiting at the foot of the stairs, and saw just the picture he had expected in Kathleen's lace-draped, Spanish-like head.

"What is it you are sending to the Holy Father, Mr. Erle?" she asked, smiling.

"My respectful gratitude for the appreciation and patronage which his predecessors have always extended to art, and for having ordained such a charming costume for ladies who attend his court," answered the young man, with a glance which pointed the words. "I have been asking Miss Lorimer to let me paint her in it, and I should like to extend the request to yourself."

"We will allow you to do so when His Holiness appoints you court painter," said Cecil, as she entered the carriage. "Here I am," she added, as they drove away, "but not, I assure you, without much inward trepidation. It is a pity to have too vivid an imagination. If I did not realize so clearly what the Pope is, I should not feel so much awe of him."

"A very convincing proof that you are not a Catho-

lic," said Kathleen. "We have no such awe—although we *know* what he is—because above all and over all he is to us the Holy Father."

"And he is so fatherly in manner," observed Mrs. Tyrconnel, "that no one can feel any uncomfortable awe after seeing him."

Cecil had her own opinion on this point, but she did not express it; and after a quick drive across the city they passed over the Ponte San Angelo, entered the Leonine City, and drove through its narrow mediæval streets, passed the great piazza of St. Peter's with its flashing fountains, and drew up in one of the courts of the Vatican, where an open doorway was occupied by the Swiss Guards.

The ladies, descending from their carriage, passed up a magnificent staircase to an antechamber, where they were received by servants of the papal household in crimson liveries, and ushered into a large and lofty *salon*, in which a group of about twenty persons were already assembled.

Most of these were ladies, several of whom were acquaintances of Mrs. and Miss Tyrconnel. There was a murmur of conversation going on among the different groups, but in subdued tones that were almost lost in the vast space of the room. Mrs. Tyrconnel shivered a little as they sat down, and looked apprehensively at her daughter. "It is very cold," she said. "I am afraid of this for you, Kathleen. I wish that I had not consented to your coming. I knew how it would be; these immense rooms are cold always."

"I do not really think I shall take cold," replied Kathleen. "It is chilly, but I am warmly clad, and we may not have long to wait."

Mrs. Tyrconnel shook her head. "One always has to wait," she said.

The event amply justified this prediction. For two hours they waited ; and as Cecil saw Kathleen growing whiter and whiter from cold and weariness, she began to share the apprehension of her mother. Yet the girl would not consent to go away and lose her audience. "What !" she said when this was proposed to her, "give up the blessing of the Holy Father because I may have a chill when I go home ! *Non possumus.* I am as firm on that point as the Vatican itself."

A courteous chamberlain came in once and explained the cause of delay. Before receiving them the Holy Father had to give an audience to an ambassador, and then to some great foreign prelates. "How tired he will be before it comes to our turn !" said one of the ladies sympathetically.

But presently, after prolonged and weary waiting, their turn came. The great doors were thrown open, and they were directed to pass into one of the beautiful Raphael loggias. What a picture met the eye as they did so ! Through the great windows sunlight was striking on the glorious frescoes, giving an effect of light and color beyond description ; and at the head of the gallery, surrounded by prelates and by the Noble Guard, stood a tall, slender figure clad in ivory white—Leo, Vicar of Christ and Father of Christendom.

It was with a strange feeling that Cecil looked at this figure. She forgot all that she had ever said of her fear that the ideal she had formed of one so august would not be realized in seeing its realization before her eyes. Indeed she confessed to herself that she had

never imagined a presence in which majesty and sweetness could be blended as they were blended here, with the highest spirituality of type and aspect. The body seemed no more than a frail, transparent shell for the soul which looked through it—that wonderful soul with its consuming ardor, its fervent piety, its far-reaching aims, and its intellectual power which is known to the whole world now, and has commanded the respect of even the worst enemies of the Papacy and of the Church. "It is impossible that any man could fulfil the ideal suggested by the claims the Roman Pontiff makes," she had declared. Yet now she saw in this august presence all those claims embodied. The Vicegerent of Christ stood before her clothed with a dignity beyond the dignity of kings, a tranquil and unapproachable majesty which nothing could mar or disturb ; the Head of the Universal Church looked out from his prison palace with eyes so piercing and so clear—deep-set under a massive brow—that not one of the needs of the world, of its difficulties or its sufferings, escaped his glance ; while the Father of the Faithful—the descendant of him to whom was given the command, "Feed My sheep"—welcomed his children with a sweetness so penetrating, a gentleness so touching, and an interest so personal, that the sense of awe was lost in affection.

All of this Cecil was able to say to herself later, when, the audience over, she could define the impression which had been made upon her ; but when she approached the benignant figure, when she caught the glance of the dark eyes and the smile of the gentle lips, she could only sink upon her knees, and touch her lips, with the first thrill of real homage that she had ever

felt, to the delicate hand—in tint like a piece of ivory carving—which was held out to her.

The rest was a dream to her. She knelt like one in a trance, absorbed in a rush of feeling which overwhelmed her, thinking of nothing save that *here* was the visible representative of God upon earth ; to this hand which she had touched was committed the power of the awful keys ; and through the lips that murmured a few words of kindest greeting, the Holy Ghost speaks to the Church of God.

"Have you no request to make to the Holy Father?" asked a purple-robed monsignor, bending toward her.

The words roused her a little. She threw back her head, looked up into the face above her, and suddenly the inmost need of her soul found expression.

"O Holy Father," she said, "give me faith! I wish to believe—I do believe—but something holds me back. Loose the spell—make me your child."

Had she been able to observe, she would have seen that the monsignor, and all of those near enough to hear what she said, looked surprised and a little startled at this unconventional outbreak. But she saw only, heeded only, the face of the Holy Father, which was full of interest, of sympathy, and of kindness, as it looked down upon her.

"My child," he said, in a voice of exquisite modulation, "faith is a gift of God. Have you asked it of Him?"

"Holy Father, yes—but it comes and goes—it does not stay with me."

"It will stay when you receive it in holy baptism. What you need is to act. So long as you are without the Church these temptations will assail you. Once

within her shelter you will find peace. Go seek that shelter, and take my blessing with you."

It was as if an oracle had spoken, or indeed—for the comparison is poor—as if she had knelt at the feet of the Lord rather than of His Vicar, and said, "What wilt Thou have me to do?" She was answered, and she bent her head for the fatherly blessing with a rush of grateful tears.

CHAPTER XX.

'IF HE IS WISE HE WILL COME."

"AND so it was the Holy Father, and not my dear old Abbé, who converted you at last!" said Kathleen to Miss Lorimer a few days after the audience which would always be so memorable to the latter.

"You forget that it was the Abbé who sent me to the Holy Father," replied Cecil. "But it is hardly possible to say that *he* converted me—he only told me what to do. In fact, no one converted me. That has been a process which has been going on for months, and which has been due to many influences. My stay in Paris did much for me, although Madame de Vérac is of the world worldly to an extreme degree. But the first awakening impulse came before Paris. Looking back, I can see that now."

"Sometimes those things go very far back—lie unheeded, as it were, for years," said Kathleen. "I have known people who traced their conversion to some impression received in their childhood."

"Mine is much more recent," answered Cecil. She hesitated a moment, then added quickly: "It may interest you to know that it dates from a few words of your brother's. It was the night of the accident to the ship at sea. I had never thought of death, of God, of anything spiritual, except in the most vague and indifferent manner. Some words that he said when the shock

came—and they were very simple words—made me realize a different way of looking at these things. It was like an awakening. Afterward he let fall more than one remark which made me think. He seemed to have a standard by which to try things different from that of other men I had known. When I learned that he was a Catholic, I said to myself that I would find out more of what Catholics believed. And the end of the finding out is—I am a Catholic myself. That, I think, must always be the end."

There was a look of exalted pleasure on Kathleen's face. "And so Gerald helped you!" she said. "How glad I am, and how glad he will be to hear it! Some of the chances of life—which, no doubt, we should not call chances—are wonderful, are they not?" She leaned back on the cushions of the couch where she was lying—she had been ill ever since the day at the Vatican—and seemed to meditate for a moment. Then she added: "I wish Gerald could come here. I think it would do him good."

"I am sure it would do *you* good," observed Cecil. 'I think you are fretting about him more than you allow any one to suppose."

"I hope I am not fretting," the girl answered; "but I know he is in great trouble, and he has no one to help him. Not that he needs any one," she added quickly, "farther than we all need sympathy and approval."

"Only the strongest souls can work without those things," said Cecil thoughtfully. "It must be a sign of strength when the necessity to do so is laid upon any one."

Kathleen sighed a little, but then smiled with the radiance of a sudden recollection. "And so it was

Gerald who set you on your journey !" she said. "I am so glad ! But when will it end ?—when are you to be received into the Church ?"

"As soon as the Abbé Ravoux thinks I am sufficiently instructed. He found me very ignorant of many things —of almost everything, I may say. And he makes instruction so delightful—there is something so wonderfully beautiful in the harmony, the coherence of every part, the luminous splendor of the Church as he shows it—that I am not impatient for this time of probation to end, except indeed that I may return to the Holy Father, as he bade me."

"There is One greater than the Holy Father, who is awaiting you at the end," said Kathleen softly. "But it is natural, I suppose, that you should not realize that yet."

Cecil flushed a little. "I think that I realize it," she answered ; "but you are right to remind me."

"One question more, if you will not regard me as impertinent," said Kathleen. "What do your friends think of your course ?"

Miss Lorimer unconsciously lifted her head with one of her old gestures of haughtiness. "I have not asked them what they think," she replied. "I have simply announced what I am about to do. But I know"—and a look of amusement came into her eyes—"what my sister and brother-in-law at home will think. They have always expected me to do something foolish and visionary—they will say now that I have done it."

"You are the last person in the world I would expect to do anything foolish or visionary," said Kathleen, with surprise. "Why should they imagine it of you ?"

"Ah, why ? That question involves a great deal.

Perhaps because they know me best, perhaps because they know me least, as is often the case with people who are nearest to one. At all events, they certainly believe me *capable du tout.*"

They both laughed, and then Cecil rose from her seat by the side of the couch. "I must go now," she said. "My hour with the Abbé is at hand, and after that I have one or two social engagements. By the by, Lionel Erle is tormenting me as to when you are coming with us to his studio. I hope that you will soon be well enough to gratify him."

"I hope so too," was the languid reply; "but this cold has taken such a deep hold upon me that I cannot tell. Give my love to the Abbé, and ask him to come and see me."

When the Abbé came he was quite startled by the girl's pallor and weakness. "Why, this will never do," he said, "as a result of a visit to the Vatican! I am shocked at you. Has the Holy Father's blessing no more effect?"

"Every effect spiritually," answered Kathleen, smiling. "His cold palace has also a strong bodily effect. But I do not mind the illness, I am so glad that I went. If I had not gone Miss Lorimer might not have gone either, and the result with her is all that is to be desired."

"Yes," answered the Abbé; "I should say that she was very impressionable if I did not perceive that her visit to the Vatican was only the culmination of a long series of impressions and convictions. She has a very striking character. I believe that she is intended to do some great work in the world."

"She sometimes speaks as if that was her hope. I

have often wondered what is in her mind, but I did not like to ask."

"I do not think she knows herself, as yet. My own impression is that she possesses great wealth, which she wishes to employ wisely. She has never told me this, but I judge so from some remarks that she has let fall."

"I should not be surprised if your conjecture is correct," said Miss Tyrconnel, after a moment's pause. "I have heard her speak more than once of the great responsibility of wealth, and of the difficulty of finding a worthy use for it; but she said nothing of herself in connection with the subject."

The Abbé nodded. "She would not be likely to mention herself in the matter," he said. "There is something very unusual about her; she is very reticent, although so frank and direct. Altogether an interesting person."

"Gerald found her so," observed Miss Tyrconnel musingly. "He spoke of her to me, but I am sure now that he must have thought much more than he said."

The priest smiled. "Do not weave a romance before you are certain of your material," he answered, "though I grant that Miss Lorimer is fitted to be the heroine of one."

Miss Lorimer's friends, meanwhile, were more concerned than they ventured to express to her, by the resolution she had communicated to them of becoming a Catholic. Mrs. Severn uttered her concern to Craven.

"Of course," she remarked, "it is no business of mine to remonstrate with Miss Lorimer, but I really think that some one ought to hold her back. She is

being carried away by a fit of enthusiasm which she will certainly regret."

"I am afraid that I cannot altogether agree with you," replied that gentleman. "Miss Lorimer has a deceptive character. Enthusiasm does not carry her away nearly so much as appearances would seem to indicate. I have seen her tested sufficiently to be sure of that. This step which she is about to take is the result, I think, of long feeling, if not of long thought. When I saw her in France last summer I could tell that the tide was setting that way with her. And I do not need the assurances of her relatives at home to believe that, her mind once made up, she has an indomitable will. No one could hold her back."

"It is a great pity," said the woman of the world.

"Why a great pity?" the man of the world asked, smiling. "If there is anything in religion at all—you will pardon the *if*—the great Roman Church possesses such unquestioned superiority over all other forms of it that I cannot conceive hesitation between them. It offers a logical reason for being, which satisfies the mind; a devotion which satisfies the heart; and a majesty of history, a splendor and poetry of ritual, which satisfy the taste. Honestly, I do not wonder at Miss Lorimer's step at all."

Mrs. Severn opened her eyes a little. "One might think you on the brink of such a step yourself," she said. "But do you know what an important person she is?"

"I know that she has a good deal of money, if that is what you mean. And the fact renders her relatives uneasy concerning her. They do not know what she

will do with it, but I would be willing to wager that in the end she will apply it to some noble purpose."

"I am afraid that her ideas are very visionary and Quixotic."

"Probably they are, but that is better than never to have any visions at all; for out of the visions may come realities of which the world is much in need. Miss Lorimer has not acted rashly on her visions; she has had humility enough to wait for guidance."

"She has found it now," said Mrs. Severn, with faint sarcasm.

"Yes," answered Craven, "I think she has; and I for one am honestly glad of it."

He expressed much the same sentiments a little later to Miss Marriott, who also declared her surprise, if not concern, at Cecil's resolution.

"It is so unlike her!" she said. "Of all people whom I have ever known, Cecil Lorimer is the most proudly self-sustained. Her own will has been the guide and rule of her conduct always. That she should surrender it now, and submit to be told what she is to believe and what she is to do!—that is wonderful. After this I shall never think that I know any one."

"It is difficult to know any one so well that he or she cannot surprise us," said Craven. "But I do not think Miss Lorimer's self-will was of the vulgar kind which cannot endure any surrender. If I understand her at all, she followed her will because it was the best standard she had, but she was not averse to submit to a better authority if she found it; and she believes that she has found it now."

"Yes, she believes it," said Grace; "but will the belief last? She is borne away now on a tide of ad-

miration for all that she sees around her here; but when the issue comes—as it will come sooner or later—between her own will and the authority to which she has submitted, *I* believe she will follow her own will."

"And I do not," said Craven. "I believe that she will be thorough in whatever she undertakes."

It was at this moment that the door opened quickly, and into the room where they were sitting Miss Lorimer entered. She looked pale and agitated as she advanced with an open note in her hand.

"Grace," she said, "here is very bad news from Miss Tyrconnel. Her mother writes me that she is very ill—dangerously ill, I fear. I am going at once to see if I can be of any use. Oh! how do you do, Mr. Craven? I beg pardon for overlooking you, but I am very much concerned by this intelligence."

"So am I," said Grace; "and she is such a frail creature that one must fear the worst. Shall I come with you?"

"No, I think not. There may be no need of me, but at least I must go and see for myself what the danger is. Mrs. Severn is not in. Tell her when she returns where I have gone. If they let me, I may remain. Good-by."

She went out as hastily as she had entered, and when Craven returned after accompanying her to the waiting carriage, he found Miss Marriott sitting so absorbed in revery that she started when he entered.

"A penny for your thoughts," he said, sitting down and looking at her, smiling.

She smiled in return, her pretty brown eyes shining in the firelight—for it was growing dusky in the great *salon*.

"I was thinking," she said, "that the accidents of life have sometimes a singular air of having been planned for us. It was such a mere accident our meeting Miss Tyrconnel, and Cecil has taken such a fancy to her."

"Yes?" said Craven, as he paused. He knew that there was something else to come.

"I hope she is not really very ill," pursued Miss Marriott; "but if she is, I suppose they will send for her brother."

"Oh!" said Craven. It was a prolonged and significant sound. "I never heard of the brother before" —drawing his chair a little closer. "Tell me about him."

Grace laughed. "There really is not much to tell," she replied. "We met him on the steamer coming over. He was very interesting, a fine type of gentleman—intellectual, cultivated, reserved about himself, and with an air of unaffected melancholy which always touches women, you know."

"And he knew also, very likely."

"No! Do I not tell you it was unaffected? Since meeting his sister we have learned the cause. He had inherited an Irish estate, and was going back to it—"

"Cause enough in that for melancholy, I grant. Probably he was afraid of being shot."

"He was afraid," continued Grace, with an air which reproved this interruption, "of the responsibility that lay before him, and the absolute necessity of giving pain to those who uphold the old *régime*, especially to his mother. It was one of the old rack-rented estates. The landlord—Mr. Tyrconnel's uncle—had no intercourse with his people except through his agent, and

the bitterness between them had, of course, been growing steadily worse during the last few years. Gerald, as his sister calls him, had left home because his remonstrances were unheeded, and he could not look on at the mismanagement and the suffering he had no power to prevent. His uncle would have alienated the estate from him if he could, but it was entailed. So it fell to him, and when we met him he was on his way to enter into possession and face the difficulties before him. They were very great. The estate was encumbered so that he had little money at his command ; his mother violently opposed his measures—indeed she has absolutely quarrelled with him on the subject ; the people, oppressed and poverty-stricken, were sullen and hard to be convinced of his good intentions. Altogether, the poor fellow has lain on anything but a bed of roses since we parted with him at Queenstown ; but, from his sister's account, he has faced it like a hero."

"What a delightful thing it is," said Craven, meditatively, "to have a woman for an advocate ! Happy Tyrconnel ! I would be willing to face even the difficulties and perils that beset an Irish landlord to have my prowess recounted as you have recounted his."

"I should be very glad, Mr. Craven, if you would be kind enough not to laugh at me," remarked Grace, with much severity. "It seems to me that any one who knew the case would speak of Mr. Tyrconnel just as I have spoken."

"Well, I fancy he has not been very comfortable," said Craven ; "but fate is apparently about to do him a good turn. Miss Lorimer shares your interest in him, I presume ?"

"She liked him very much, but I suppose you have

discovered by this time that Cecil is not very impressionable where men are concerned. I cannot say that she liked him more than as an interesting acquaintance who made our voyage very pleasant to us."

"If he is wise he will come to see his sister," said Craven. "He may fail, as other men have failed before him ; but he will never find a fortune better worth winning than Miss Lorimer's heart."

"It is such a great heart that I do not know the man who is worthy to fill it," said Grace.

"Neither do I," Craven assented ; "yet it is better for its own sake that it should be filled even by one who may not be altogether worthy of it. And, seriously, I have some hopes of your Irishman."

"Not *mine*," said Grace, laughing. "Whatever Cecil thought of him, it was evident to the most superficial observation what he thought of her."

"I did not imagine he was really yours," said Craven. "You praised him too frankly. And perhaps you will pardon me for saying that I was glad to hear it."

Probably Grace was not sorry that Mrs. Severn's entrance at this moment prevented the necessity of answering that remark.

CHAPTER XXI.

"I AM GERALD TYRCONNEL."

MISS MARRIOTT proved a true prophet. The news of his sister's serious illness brought Gerald Tyrconnel to Rome as fast as steam could carry him. There had always subsisted a very tender affection between the brother and sister; and, knowing her delicate constitution, he did not wait to be told that she was in danger, but, without a moment's delay in starting, hastened at once to her bedside.

He entered Rome after nightfall, and drove directly to his mother's lodgings. The dark old palace seemed full of gloom as he entered under the vast, echoing arch, and asked the porter who emerged for Mrs. Tyrconnel's apartment. He dared not inquire how Kathleen was, but his heart was beating painfully with a sense of foreboding as he climbed the stone staircase and finally rang the bell of the door indicated.

It was opened by his mother's maid, who greeted him with a welcome such as only an Irish servant can utter.

"O Mr. Gerald! but it's glad I am to see you!" she cried. "And Miss Kathleen will be happy! Don't I see how she's fretting for you all the time!"

"How is she, Mary?" he asked, reassured somewhat by the last words.

"Thank God, she's better," Mary answered; "but

she's been very bad, and it's hard work the mistress and Miss Cecil and I have had to bring her through. The doctor says good nursing done it, and it's true for him. She's had the best of it, sure."

"Miss Cecil!" repeated Tyrconnel, wondering if he heard aright.

"Sure that's Miss Lorimer," said Mary. "She's been here nearly all the time, and an angel of a young lady she is. She's got a way wid her that takes the heart out of your breast. But come in here, Mr. Gerald, while I go and tell the mistress you've come."

She opened a door, and Gerald passed into a large, dim room, where at first he could see nothing but the glow of the fire at what seemed a remote distance. But he had not advanced more than half-way down the length of the apartment, when a figure rose from the depths of a large chair and came to meet him.

"Your patient is much better, doctor," said a voice which sent a thrill through him with its remembered tones. "I left her sleeping, and have been very near sleeping myself here in the dark."

The speaker was a good deal surprised when the supposed doctor held out his hand.

"I am very grateful to hear that she is better," was the reply of a voice that she too remembered. "But instead of being the doctor I am Gerald Tyrconnel. You, I think, are Miss Lorimer, and I am glad that my first words to you are words of thanks for your kindness to my sister."

"O Mr. Tyrconnel!" said Cecil. "The want of light must excuse my mistake. I am very glad you have come, for I am sure that your presence will be Kathleen's best medicine. And I am glad also that you

have come just when we have good news for you. Yes, your sister is much better."

"Thank God!" said Tyrconnel. "I am infinitely relieved to hear it; for I have feared—everything. She is very fragile, as you have no doubt perceived."

"Yes; for a few days the doctors—we all—were very apprehensive. But to-day I can perceive that she is improving. I fear, however, that you cannot hope to see her to-night; it would excite her too much."

"I am very willing to wait. It is enough to know that she is better."

"Meanwhile has Mrs. Tyrconnel heard that you are here? I think she is with Kathleen. I will send her to you and take her place."

She turned to go, anxious to avoid the meeting between mother and son, and Tyrconnel made no effort to detain her. But as he moved across the floor to open the door for her, he said, in a voice full of feeling:

"I cannot say how happy I am to renew the acquaintance which made my last voyage across the Atlantic such a bright memory in my life; nor can I tell you how grateful I am for your goodness to my sister. Words are very poor in expressing such obligations."

"There are no obligations involved," returned Cecil quickly. "I owe your sister a great deal—when she is better she will tell you in what way—and I have become warmly attached to her. I am here, therefore, because it is a pleasure to me to be with her. No thanks are due to me; on the contrary, I have to thank your mother for allowing me to help her."

With a bend of her head, and a smile which even the dim light revealed full of sweetness, she passed him and was gone.

Tyrconnel walked slowly back the length of the apartment to the fire, and there he stood, looking at the chair from which Cecil had risen, and so lost in thought that he did not heed the entrance of a servant with lights, until his mother followed a few minutes later.

Her welcome was more cordial than he had ventured to expect. In truth, she had been so wretched over one child that her heart was unconsciously softened toward the other, and she could not but be glad that Kathleen should have the great happiness of seeing her brother. She described the girl's illness minutely, dwelt upon its symptoms, told what the doctors said, and finally spoke of Cecil.

"I hardly know what I should have done without Miss Lorimer," she said. "At first I was averse to letting her assist me in nursing Kathleen, but she seemed so anxious that I finally yielded, and she has proved a treasure—so capable, so prompt, so devoted. I have never felt more grateful to any one than I do to her; for she has really sustained me during this terrible time of anxiety."

"Why did you not summon me at once?" asked Tyrconnel. "I should not be here now if I had not feared what illness with Kathleen must mean."

"It did not seem necessary; the doctors said all along that there was no danger, but I knew that they were anxious."

"And she is positively better?"

"Very much better, but I dare not let her know tonight that you are here. It would excite her too much. Are you ill yourself?" she asked, in a tone of concern, as it struck her how pale he was. "You really look so."

"Oh, I am quite well," he answered; "but of course I have been very anxious, and have had a hurried and fatiguing journey. I shall sleep well to-night."

He did sleep well, but in his dreams he found himself again and again advancing down a long room—once it seemed one of the vast galleries of the Vatican—to meet Cecil Lorimer, who came toward him with outstretched hand. Just before awaking he dreamed of her as he had seen her last on the deck of the steamer, when he had said to himself with sadness of heart that he should never see her again—and woke with a thrill to hear the bells of Rome ringing the Angelus.

He rose at once, and having, like most Irishmen who are worthy of the name, a deep strain of religious feeling in his nature, he went out to find a church in which to return thanks for the good news that had greeted him at the end of his journey, and to render to God that act of homage which, due everywhere, seems specially due in the Eternal City of His Vicar.

There is not any part of Rome where one need go far to find a church. Tyrconnel found the ever-open portal very near at hand, and entering, passed down the dim nave until he found a Mass in progress in one of the chapels. About twenty persons were gathered before the altar, and as he knelt just within the gates his eye was attracted by the figure of a lady kneeling in front of him. It hardly required the grace of her form and bearing to tell him it was Cecil Lorimer. Instinct told him that at once, and his surprise was great to perceive that she seemed to be a Catholic. He was very certain that when they were on the ship together she had not been a Catholic, and he watched her now with a wonder which amounted to a distraction, per-

ceiving that not one of the Roman group around was more devout in manner than herself. "She *must* be a Catholic; and yet, if so, it is strange Kathleen should never have mentioned it," he thought; not knowing that after their visit to the Vatican Kathleen had been too ill to write to him.

After the Mass was over he waited and met Cecil—very much to her surprise—at the door of the church. "I hope that I need not introduce myself again by daylight," he said, as he advanced toward her. "But I could not blame you if it were necessary, for we scarcely saw each other last night."

"I should blame myself, however, if it were necessary," replied Cecil, with a smile. "Do you think I have forgotten all our days of pleasant companionship on the ship? I told you then that we should meet again some day. I think, if I remember right, that it was you who doubted it."

"I had forgotten for the time that all roads lead to Rome," he said. "Yet even in Rome there are different paths, and I am very happy that yours and my sister's chanced to meet."

"It has been a great pleasure—I may say a great privilege—to me to know her," Miss Lorimer answered. "It is in great measure owing to my acquaintance with her that I have found the road which leads to the true Rome—the City of St. Peter."

Involuntarily Tyrconnel held out his hand with a warm gesture of congratulation.

"I thought you must be a Catholic when I saw you in the church," he said. "And yet it seemed almost incredible, for you certainly were not one when we parted."

She shook her head. "Certainly I was not," she answered. "If you remember the night of the collision with the iceberg, you must also remember that I was far more of a heathen than anything else. But I think I was rather a high-minded heathen. That is all which could be said for me. I believed in justice and honor and truth and other noble abstractions, but I knew as little as possible of God, from whom they derive their meaning."

"I do not remember that you impressed me at all as a heathen," said Tyrconnel, smiling; "but I remember exceedingly well the doctrine that you preached of the possibility of accomplishing anything by will and effort. I thought it rather impracticable—the views, if you will excuse me, of one who had no experience of the difficulties of life. But since then, in my moments of darkest discouragement, your words have recurred to me and strengthened my resolution. I have fancied once or twice that you might like to know this; for I think I perceived in you a very strong desire to benefit your fellow-creatures."

She looked at him with a glow in her eyes—the glow which springs from deeply touched feeling. "I like very much to know it," she said, "especially since I have heard what difficulties you are struggling with. I never fancied that any words of mine could help a man in such a struggle—for you are right in thinking that I have little practical experience of the difficulties of life—but I am more than glad if they have done so, I am grateful."

"Nay, it is I who should be—who am—grateful," he said. "Kathleen has told you, I see, something of what I have been trying to do, so you may imagine

how much I have needed encouragement—but what an egotist I am to be talking of myself, without asking if you have seen her this morning! I presume that you remained with my mother last night?"

"Yes, and I went to Kathleen's bedside just before I came out. She was sleeping so calmly and sweetly that I have finally laid aside all fear. And I am glad to think what a happiness is before her when she knows that you are here." They had reached the archway of the old palace, and there she paused. "I will bid you good-morning here," she said. "While it is still early—no fashionable people about to be shocked—I shall go home."

"You do not mean that you will walk?"

"I think so—I am fond of walking—but if I grow tired I can take a carriage on the way. Tell Kathleen that I will see her soon again; and when you are at leisure, Mr. Tyrconnel, I shall be happy to see *you*."

"But this will never do," he said. "If you will not allow me to accompany you—"

She shook her head, smiling. "That would not answer at all," she replied.

"Then you must let me call a carriage for you. I am not very well versed in social customs, but I hardly think it is the thing for you to walk across Rome unattended. Come in, and I will send the *concierge*—what do they call him in Italian?—for a carriage, if you will not return to my mother's apartment and take breakfast with us."

"No," she said; "I really must go home now. When I went into the church I meant it only for a stopping-place on my journey. I am sometimes unconventional when I can safely be so, and I enjoyed the

thought of walking across Rome alone in the early morning."

"I am sorry to interfere with anything which you would enjoy, but I really think my plan is best."

"I suppose it is," she answered, with a little sigh, as she entered the court. "Send for the carriage, please."

The carriage was sent for—could not of course be found at once, and Tyrconnel had a few more minutes of conversation in the shadow of the dark old archway. Then a cab drove up; he placed Cecil in it, and after it drove away bounded as lightly as a boy up the stairs to his mother's apartment.

CHAPTER XXII.

"WITH EMPTY HANDS."

THE days that followed Tyrconnel's arrival in Rome were very pleasant. His presence helped Kathleen to recover rapidly ; and, first around her convalescent couch, afterward in excursions and drives on sunny days to various points about Rome, some delightful hours were spent by a party that combined many agreeable elements. Beside the Tyrconnels and Miss Lorimer, Grace Marriott and Craven, Mrs. Severn and Lionel Erle made up a group of altogether sympathetic quality ; and, according to the usual habit of people in a place where there is nothing to do but meet, hardly a day passed without bringing them together in one way or another. There is so much to see and do in Rome—galleries, ruins, churches, villas, to visit ; the Pincian to lounge upon and review all the world, hospitable salons in which to meet—he must be dull indeed who does not find the charm of the Eternal City grow upon him day by day.

It was an old charm to Gerald Tyrconnel ; but now there was a fresh one interwoven with it, which deepened constantly. He scarcely dared give it a name to himself ; and yet he knew that if it had cost him a struggle to part with Cecil Lorimer when he had known her before, the struggle would be tenfold greater now. But he did not think of parting, in these sunny, charm-

ing hours of delightful companionship. The present sufficed him. He shook off the memory of the sad, dark days he had left in Ireland—of the difficulties there to which he must return—and gladdened Kathleen's heart by his cheerfulness of manner and bearing. Only now and then a cloud seemed to fall upon him, and it chanced that one of these moments of despondency brought forth a confidence to Cecil which interested and touched her.

They were standing together on the platform in front of San Pietro in Montorio, where they had gone by Kathleen's request; and the tombs in the church of "sad Ulster's princes"* had so affected Tyrconnel that the shadow was still resting over him when Cecil and he came out into the sunshine to admire the wonderful view of the city which this terrace commands. It was a scene which usually would have wakened in him a quick response of delight and admiration, for all ancient and modern Rome lies spread before the gaze. But now he looked at it with almost unheeding eyes; for his mental glance was fixed on that beautiful Isle of Sorrow across the seas, where such woe has reigned for centuries.

"Looking over the earth, looking over history, where can one find anything to equal her in the greatness and duration of her sorrows?" he said. "She is the martyr among nations, on whom God has laid His severest trials, as if to prove the majesty and constancy of her faith."

"And in proving it she has been made such a spectacle for the edification of mankind," said Cecil, "that it

* Tyrconnel and Tyrone.

seems to me one can hardly regret the suffering which has called forth such heroic virtue."

"If it were all heroic virtue!" he remarked. "But that is too much to expect. There is a human side that saddens one because it is made up of desperation and crime. Great wrongs madden at last, and great suffering leads to despair if it does not lead to sanctity. Collectively, the people of Ireland have for centuries shown the spirit of saints; but always there has been an element in which the usual fruit of oppression is seen in desperate deeds, and that element has increased of late. The long-suffering people have now to endure, besides the tyranny of their oppressors, the worse tyranny—worse because encompassing their lives more closely—of the secret societies banded together for crime."

"It must be terrible!" said Cecil, in a tone of deepest sympathy.

"It *is* terrible," he answered. "And here is where I find my efforts most baffled. The men who compose these societies, and especially those who lead them, are entirely revolutionary and socialistic in spirit. They do not desire that any good feeling should be established between landlord and tenant. The bitterness that exists—the hatred which the very name of landlord produces in the Irish peasant's breast—serves their ends exactly. And so a good landlord is more abhorrent in their eyes than a bad one. The people—our long-suffering, true-hearted Catholic people—are not with them, but they are terrorized by them. Brave as they are by nature, they are not brave enough to defy these midnight murderers. Considering the deeds of blood so constantly perpetrated, it is too much to ex-

pect that they should not be intimidated. And so, as I have said, at every turn I find my efforts baffled."

"Do they interfere between you and your tenants?" asked Cecil.

"Constantly," he answered. "I have received many threatening letters warning me that if I did not do certain things, or leave certain other things undone, I should draw down on my head the vengeance of this secret power. I never paid the slightest attention to such warnings. But it is a very different matter with the people. When a man is told that he shall not take a holding because another disaffected and thoroughly bad tenant has been obliged to give it up, he simply dare not touch it. If he is told that he must withhold the rent, he dare not pay it. So that our unhappy land seems given over to hopeless misery, and one's attempts to do good are frustrated in all directions."

"But you should not lose courage," said Cecil. "Oh, you should keep a strong heart, for such a battle is worth fighting and winning! To lift people from a slough of misery, to make their lives better, to relieve them from a burden of despair, to show them the way to comfort, and help them to walk in it—surely there could not be a work in this world better worth doing, nor one more pleasing to God."

"You are right," replied Tyrconnel, catching somewhat the glow of her enthusiasm, but with the sadness which had overmastered him still evident in look and tone. "Those are the things I have said to myself, that I say to myself still; but I have learned that to *do* them is all but impossible. When we crossed the ocean together I knew that I was going to a hard task, but I did not know half how hard it would prove. I was

aware that I should have to reckon with the bitter opposition of my mother when I attempted any change in the management of the estate—perhaps Kathleen has told you that it had been horribly mismanaged for many years ?"

"Yes, she told me that there were many abuses and oppressions which you have endeavored to abolish."

"I can give you no idea of their extent. It was, like numberless other estates in Ireland, rack-rented to the last degree, impoverished, with nothing spent on the land and everything taken out of it ; cottages in ruins, the tenants hopeless, broken-spirited—a picture of wretchedness and the abuse of power. I expected, as I said, opposition from my mother when I attempted to change all this ; but I did not expect to find the people so sullen, and the secret societies so antagonistic to me. Between all these, and with hands tied by the lack of that potent factor called money, I confess to you that my heart and my courage alike have nearly failed."

There was something so touching to Cecil in these last words—they were so evidently wrung from the speaker, so simply, so unconsciously said—that she would have liked to put out her hand and touch his in token of sympathy. But that being impossible, she said in a voice of great feeling :

"I am glad that you say 'nearly' failed only, for you must not let them fail. It is such a great thing in this world of selfishness to try, even, to do something altogether worth doing. Though you cannot at once see the fruits of your efforts, it is a great privilege to be allowed to make them. Don't lose courage, then, even if the fight *is* hard. When you mean only good to your

people, it cannot be but that you will win their confidence at last."

"I endeavor to reassure myself with that reflection," he answered; "but, you see, I have so little power to do what I desire for their benefit. Even if the rents were not withheld—as they are in several cases, one or two of which will give me a great deal of trouble, I fear—I cannot press a people so desperately poor. I have voluntarily lowered the rent of almost every tenant, so that my income is much diminished, and out of this income I have to pay heavy debts. This leaves absolutely no margin for the improvements I have wished to make in the estate—the improvements that *must* be made if it is ever to become such an estate as a Christian man can in conscience possess."

"Then money could help you?" said Cecil. "It could strengthen your hands and aid you to accomplish your ends?"

He laughed slightly. "What is there in this world," he asked, "in which money cannot help? God, no doubt, can work without it when He wills to do so; but usually He works by human means, of which it is one of the most powerful. Yes, money could do much for me. It would build habitations fit for men and women to live in, and establish industries that would enable a starving people to earn their bread at home instead of being driven to cross the seas for it; it would make what is now a wilderness blossom like the rose—ah, do not lead me to say all that it could do; for I should weary you, my day-dreams are so many! From my early boyhood I brooded over these things; I saw the suffering, the desperate, hopeless poverty of the people ever before my eyes; I saw them driven forth in sorrow

and sadness as exiles from the land which they love with passionate devotion; and I said to myself that some day I would see if one man at least could not change things for the better. I dreamed of providing employment for all who wanted it, of well-cultivated lands and comfortable cottages, and discontent banished from one corner of the land. And then I dreamed of the money which would be required to bring about this change. 'I will go to the other side of the world and make it,' I said to myself, 'so that I may be ready when the opportunity comes.' I went, but the opportunity came sooner than I expected, before the fortune was made; and I returned as I had gone—with empty hands."

His voice sank a little over the last words, as if he realized afresh the depressing fact of their emptiness; and Cecil's heart gave a sudden throb of self-reproach as she remembered how she had once said of him, lightly and carelessly, "It seems a very pitiful thing to do—to give one's best years just to accumulate money." And this was the reason for which he desired to accumulate it—that he might lessen the misery of his people, and do such good as she had only vaguely pondered. She felt as if she must beg his pardon for that past rash judgment—this man who was doing with empty hands more than her full ones had ever accomplished! But before she could frame words to express her rush of feeling, Kathleen came out of the church and joined them.

"Oh, what a scene!" she cried, with a deep, soft sigh of delight, as she leaned against the parapet by Cecil's side and looked out over the picture which lay before them—the circling heights of ancient Rome

crowned with ruins, palaces, and churches ; the Campus Martius covered with the roofs and towers of the mediæval city ; the Castle of San Angelo overlooking the Tiber ; and the vast mass of the Vatican rising above the crowded houses of the Borgo ; while the rounded, wonderful outlines of St. Peter's dome stood out against the soft blue background of the distant hills.

"St. Peter had his See at his feet when he came here to die," said Tyrconnel. "It must have been a marvellous sight upon that day, and more marvellous still to the eye of faith piercing the future. Was a vision vouchsafed him of the glory of that future—of the centuries in which his successors should rule with unquestioned sway over all the kingdoms and nations of the earth, of the light pouring forth from this centre over the whole world, of the shrine and refuge that it should prove to the oppressed of all lands? Truly, if so, he might have said a *Nunc dimittis*."

"Whether the vision was vouchsafed him or not, I am sure he said it," replied Cecil. "That impetuous, vehement, loving heart was not likely to count pain or death when it was a question of rejoining his Master by his Master's own road. Yes, it must have been with a joyous heart that he stood here and looked out over the imperial city, which was to be the seat of his power unto the end of time—even if he did not foresee all that we know."

"'History is mad or finds its meaning here,'" quoted Tyrconnel, looking toward that majestic dome which rises above the tomb of him who suffered an ignominious death on the height of Janiculum. "Some phases of human thought I can understand, but what I cannot understand is how any mind capable of reading or un-

derstanding history can be blind to the part which the See of Peter has played in it—can fail to see the supernatural element thus introduced into human affairs, and which cannot be explained on any human ground whatever. He who reigns in the Vatican yonder, whom not even an infidel and usurping power dares to touch, has no more material strength than the poor Jewish prisoner dying here. And, with few exceptions, this has been the case with the long line of Pontiffs—a fact to which history offers no parallel. And yet there are people for whom this has no meaning."

"And I was one of them only yesterday," said Cecil, with a touch of humility in her voice.

"No," said Tyrconnel quickly; "you were one of those who did not think at all—on this subject, I mean. When you began to think, you saw the truth in its completeness."

She smiled a little. "At least," she said, "I am glad that it was at the feet of St. Peter I was brought to understand his Catholic and Roman faith. And this being so, I think I might ask him to obtain a great favor for me. I will make a pilgrimage to his tomb for the purpose."

"Let us go now," said Kathleen quickly, "and we will ask all together for you. I am always glad to go to St. Peter's. Come."

CHAPTER XXIII.

"LET ME HELP YOU."

FROM the hill "which saw St. Peter die" to the grand Basilica where his body lies is not a great distance, and the road lies through one of the most interesting quarters of Rome. Every foot of the way is filled with memories of the warlike clash and splendid tumult of ages when men did and dared great deeds. Every tower and ruined wall is written over and over again with records of history stretching back through centuries. Great figures seem to step forth on every side ; pagan philosopher and Christian saint, soldiers of ancient Rome and martyrs of Christ, heathen emperors and mediæval kings, jostle one another, as it were ; there is not a page of human history which does not touch, in one form or another, this great centre of human existence. And it is like a burst of exultant music when from the narrow, winding, deep-colored streets one enters the noble piazza of St. Peter's, with its encircling colonnades, its obelisk and springing fountains. All the varied pageant of ages seems to lead to this—space to kneel at the feet of Christ's Vicar.

Cecil's heart bounded with the thought that she had no longer the sense of alienation with which she first entered here. She had felt then that in all this greatness she had no part—she was a stranger and an outsider, cut off from the inheritance of all the past, which

stretched back in unbroken continuity to the hour when the Fisherman of Galilee entered the city of the Cæsars. Everything surrounding her, every sentiment, every tradition, every embodied idea, appealed so irresistibly to her love of greatness, that she felt this alienation as only a few souls feel it—a few who cannot be fed on the narrow and colorless traditions of Protestantism, and who, standing amid the mighty monuments of Rome, realize how great an inheritance has been wrested from them.

"I cannot tell you," she said to her companions, as they crossed the portico, "how painfully I felt myself an alien when I entered here first. It was a consciousness which overwhelmed me so that I could hardly even admire. Everything seemed saying to me, 'In all this you have no share.' I could not console myself with any fiction of 'a common Christianity,' for I *saw* here what I had felt before—that Christianity is Roman or it is nothing. And I was among the number of those who stood apart from it, and had no right in this ancient sanctuary save as a stranger and sightseer, admitted by courtesy within its walls!"

"But now you come as a child to her rightful inheritance," said Kathleen, holding out her hand; and while Tyrconnel lifted the heavy leathern curtain, she drew Cecil within the marvellous interior, where majesty of space and harmony of proportion, such as man never planned before, are united with a richness of color, a splendor of decoration, passing all description. As they slowly walked up the vast nave toward the circle of star-like lamps which mark the tomb of the Apostles. Tyrconnel said softly, as if thinking aloud;

" ' This shall come to pass—
From yonder altar to their kingdoms down
The kings once more shall pace, sceptre and crown
On that dim sea of marble and of brass
Showering, as angels on the sea of glass,
Their amaranthine wreaths.'

Do you know our Irish poet, Aubrey de Vere?" he asked, in answer to Cecil's inquiring glance. " He has written a beautiful set of sonnets which he calls ' Urbs Roma,' and from which those lines are taken. There is hardly a spot in Rome where some thought of his is not recalled."

" I know many of his poems," Cecil answered, " and I must find the sonnets of which you speak. Kathleen has repeated several for me. I do not wonder that this ' dim sea of marble ' should suggest to him that which we dream of as stretching before the throne of God. I can never think of anything else when I see it spreading away before me."

It is indeed a vista of unsurpassed beauty which this great nave of St. Peter's offers—the vast expanse of polished marble underfoot, the richly gilded roof above, the splendid sculptured arches opening on each side glimpses into the chapels which line the aisles, the noble space that marks the soaring dome, under which stands the canopied high altar, and the glory of golden light which at the end of the tribune pours above the chair of St. Peter—all unite to form a picture of unapproachable majesty and magnificence.

But it was when Cecil knelt at the marble balustrade which guards the opening before the great confessional that she was conscious of an emotion far beyond the power of words to express. Ardent faith and passion-

ate gratitude almost overwhelmed her as she made her earnest solicitation that God would enable her to show by living deeds her sense of what He had done for her.

When they left the church Tyrconnel was struck by the expression of her face. There was a radiance on it and a light in her eyes as of one who had seen a vision. As they stood on the steps of the portico while their carriage drove up, she looked toward the Vatican and said to Kathleen : "The hands are the hands of Leo, but the voice is the voice of Peter, and it bade me go and work for man in token of gratitude to God. So I think I may safely believe that the way will be opened for me."

"I am sure of that," was the earnest answer. It was the first time that Cecil had spoken, save in general terms, of anything that had been said in the last audience which the Holy Father had granted her—a private audience, given at the special request of the Abbé Ravoux, who knew Rome well, and knew just what channels to employ to gain whatever end he had in view.

It was in a mood of positive exaltation that Miss Lorimer went home that day. Such moods come probably now and then to all of us, but they come most of all to the impressionable and enthusiastic—especially to those who have dreamed high dreams and before whom seems to open a vista of possibility for their fulfilment. At such times we neither see nor heed all the difficulties that must encompass this fulfilment, as they encompass everything earthly. Our gaze is on the sunlit heights, and we do not mark the toilsome, cloud-wrapped way that lies between us and the point we fain would reach. To Cecil, who had known little of disappointment, it

seemed as if a providential way had opened by which she might accomplish all the good she longed to do ; she had only to pour the surplus wealth that burdened her into Tyrconnel's hands to see the fulfilment of plans so beneficent and wide-reaching that they appeared the wonderful realization of her own ideals. She was so absorbed in this thought that it did not occur to her to consider how it would be possible for Tyrconnel to accept and use her wealth, even though it were for ends wholly impersonal. There could be no doubt that Cecil was open to the charge so often brought against enthusiasts—her head was sometimes in the clouds.

Several days passed before she had an opportunity to speak to Tyrconnel on the subject burning at her heart. But at last they were alone one afternoon in the grounds of the Villa Albani ; the rest of their party were still lingering within the Villa, but they had passed into the garden. It is impossible to imagine anything more beautiful than this spot, and, beguiled by the spell of its classic grace and loveliness, Cecil had almost forgotten her purpose until Tyrconnel suggested, after they had been walking for some time, that they should rest a while in a charming nook, where a fountain filled the silence with its musical murmur, and the white shapes of statues gleamed against the dark green of cypress and ilex. Cecil placed herself on a seat, and then it suddenly occurred to her that here was her opportunity. She looked up at Tyrconnel, who stood beside her, and with characteristic frankness plunged at once into the subject so near her heart.

"Mr. Tyrconnel," she said, a slight tension of voice alone betraying her nervousness, "do you remember

what you said to me about your difficulties in Ireland the other day at San Pietro in Montorio ?"

"I remember," answered Tyrconnel, smiling, "that I talked at length and very egotistically. You were good enough to encourage me in egotism by your interest. I hope you have not repented of it."

"No," she replied, gravely. "I was very much interested in all that you told me, and especially in your plans for improving the lives of the people. They seemed to me very wise plans—such as are certain to succeed and do good, because they would enable people to help themselves."

"I am glad you think so well of them," he said. "Nothing is certain until it has been tested ; but I believe that they would succeed—if they could be tried. But," he added, "that is an insurmountable 'if.'"

"It need not be insurmountable," she said quickly, "if you will let others help you. If some one who is very rich—richer than anybody need be—should offer you the means for this good work, would you refuse it ?"

"Well, yes," answered Tyrconnel, after a moment's surprised pause ; "I should have no alternative but to refuse, because I could have no certainty that the money would not be thrown away. I would risk my own if I had it, but I could not risk that of some one else."

"Not even if some one else were more than willing for it to be risked—as willing as you could be ?"

"Not even then, for the responsibility would be mine. And the whole world will tell you that philanthropic schemes are of all schemes the least likely to make a

profitable return. But why do you ask? Do you know of any one anxious to play at philanthropy?"

"No," she answered, and something in her tone showed that she was a little wounded, "I do not know of any one anxious to *play* at philanthropy; but I know some one who is very anxious, more anxious than I can tell you, to do some good—some real, lasting good—in the world with a superfluity of money which happens to be hers."

"Miss Lorimer!" The next moment he had seated himself beside her. "Forgive me if I have misunderstood you," he said earnestly. "I see now that you are speaking of yourself. How can I thank you for such a generous thought! It is like you—to wish to put out your hand and help wherever you know that suffering exists. I am grateful for myself and for my poor people, but you must see that it is impossible for me to take what you so generously offer."

"Why is it impossible?" she asked, turning on him a glance of eloquent appeal. "You do not know how long I have been desiring and seeking a way to spend my wealth in doing some real, practical good. And now that I have found the way, why should you deny me the happiness of doing it? I can never find a better way—of that I am sure, and you must be sure too. Let me help you, then. Let me put my useless money into those things of which you spoke—cultivated lands and good houses, and industries to give the people employment. That is just the work I have dreamed of. You will not—surely you *can* not—deny me the opportunity to realize this dream!"

How did Tyrconnel restrain himself from taking the hands she unconsciously clasped in her appeal and lift-

ing them to his lips? He hardly knew. His heart leaped, his head seemed for an instant whirling as she leaned toward him saying, "Let me help you!" All the love he had never before acknowledged suddenly asserted itself with a force that almost deprived him of self-control. He did not know afterward how he resisted the temptation which assailed him so strongly—the temptation to speak, to cry out passionately, "I love you—I love you!" Ah, if only he might pray her to share his labors, to help him indeed! But the money of which she spoke stood like a barrier between them, and the thought of his own poverty nerved him to silence. The conviction flashed upon him like a scorching flame that if he had ever meant to ask her to share his life he had waited too long—it was too late to speak after she had told him of her superfluity of wealth, and he had told her how sorely he needed money. Thoughts like these—thoughts on which a whole life hinge—can pass quickly. There was not a very long pause before he answered Cecil's last words with a gravity which chilled her.

"My dear Miss Lorimer, you forget that what you are asking me to do is to allow you to spend your money on my estate for the benefit of my tenants. You must see, if you will pause a moment and think, that such a thing is impossible in the world as it is at present constituted. Your generous ardor leads you to forget this, but I am forced to remember it. For your sake, as well as for the sake of my people, I wish that it *were* possible, but it is not."

In the sharpness of her disappointment tears welled into her eyes, and startled herself as well as Tyrconnel by suddenly dropping in a crystal shower. He uttered

a hasty exclamation, which she did not catch, for she was making an effort to speak composedly.

"I did not mean to be so childish," she said, lifting her handkerchief to her eyes. "But when one hopes a great deal it is hard to bear disappointment. I had so long been looking for such an opportunity, and when I found it I did not think of being denied. It seems so simple a thing and so natural a thing to spend what one has in doing good, that I have never considered what the world would think or say in such a case. Therefore I have made, it seems, a great mistake. You must pardon me. I have troubled you and done no good."

"Troubled me!" he repeated, passionately. "Do you think it is troubling me to have showed me the possibilities that lie in such a heart and such a nature as yours? From this day you have made the world a better place to me; for I have seen with my own eyes how gentle and lofty thoughts transmute themselves into noble deeds. I wish I could thank you for the revelation of yourself, as well as for all that you desire to do; but the only return I seem able to make is to wound and disappoint you! Forgive me, if you can. You do not know how hard it is to me."

Something in the tone of his last words made her glance at him quickly. What she saw in his face or read in his eyes—what unconscious betrayal of himself he made—it is difficult to tell; but she suddenly rose to her feet.

"I am sorry," she said, "that I have made anything hard to you. It was not what I meant; but I have been told that I am visionary, and perhaps it is true. Probably this is something I should not have thought

of. Let us try to forget it. And now Mrs. Severn will be wondering where I am. Shall we find the others ?''

It was with a sense as of a horrible necessity that he turned with her down the path which led to the Villa. He knew that she felt herself misunderstood, that he seemed cold and unsympathetic ; he longed miserably to express a part at least of all that was in his heart, but how could he express a part without uttering the whole ? He felt like a man under a spell of malign enchantment as he walked by her side down the long, box-bordered avenue, and found no words which his lips dared utter.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"NOT OF—HIM."

LIKE all impulsive people, Cecil Lorimer had many a time been compelled to regret having spoken or acted too hastily ; but never before had she suffered from this cause so acutely as she did now, when realizing what a mistake she had committed in making an offer of pecuniary assistance to Tyrconnel. That power of self-control and instinctive repression of all outward signs of emotion, which the conventional life of the world teaches so effectually, enabled her to resume her usual manner on rejoining the party in the Villa. She simply ignored the aching, stinging sense of disappointment and humiliation by which she had been at first overwhelmed, and which had betrayed her into that uncharacteristic burst of tears, as a brave spirit often ignores physical pain and infirmity when occasion requires. Not only to the brilliant company gathered that evening in Mrs. Severn's *salon*, but to Tyrconnel as well, did she seem quite her ordinary self. But nature —particularly so high-strung a nature as hers—though it may, under the constraint of a resolute will, manifest wonderful pluck and endurance in an emergency, must inevitably give way after a time ; and when she had at last gained the solitude of her chamber that night, and had dismissed her maid, all the restraint she had imposed on herself vanished—dropping away from her

like a mask that is thrown aside. Pale and agitated, she walked up and down the floor with hasty steps and clasped hands, self-reproachful, mortified, and miserable.

"How could I have been so stupid, so senseless, as to do such a thing!" she exclaimed to herself, in a paroxysm of unavailing regret. "How could I have imagined for a moment that he would accept from a stranger—one on whom he had no claim, and who had no claim on him—such an obligation! I see now that, as he said, it is impossible. Oh, what must he think of me—what *can* he think but that I intended—that I wished—"

She flung herself into a deep chair that stood in a recess beside a window, and bowed her burning face into her hands, a few tears trickling through the slender fingers.

"And yet it seemed to me—it does seem to me—reasonable, natural, that of my useless abundance I should endeavor to help those who need help so sorely," she murmured. "He ought to have known—he ought to have understood! It is ungenerous of him—it is unjust! He is depriving these people who are in such dire straits of poverty of the comfort and relief which a word of his would bring them. I will speak to him again; I will ask him if he thinks he has a right to do this. I will at least make him understand"—she lifted her head haughtily—"that I was thinking only of the poor people, not of—*him*."

But she did not speak again on the subject; for the more she thought of her terrible blunder, the more distressed and embarrassed was she; and, despite her utmost efforts to avoid any change of manner, this em-

barrassment showed itself, when she met Tyrconnel on the following day, in a certain reserve and coldness which cut him to the heart. He could not see that he had given her any cause for resentment, or that he could have acted differently ; yet he was miserable and self-reproachful—ready to blame himself rather than her for a misapprehension that had been caused by no fault on his part ; longing to ask in how he had offended her and to deprecate her displeasure, but having neither courage nor opportunity for such explanation. In truth, if opportunity had been afforded him—and it was not—what could he have said ? He knew that if he spoke at all the expression of his love would force itself from his lips ; and he said to himself that to speak of love *now* would simply be tantamount to an acknowledgment that he had held back so long as he did not know of her wealth, and came forward as soon as he was assured of it.

For several days he debated with himself what he should, or rather what he could, do, and finally decided to go back to Ireland. It was useless to remain in Rome waiting for the impossible—a return of the frank, friendly association between Cecil and himself which had been such a happiness to him. There was more pain than pleasure in meeting her now, as he felt in every word, every tone, a change so subtle as to be indescribable in words, yet so decided as to admit of no doubt as to its existence. That she strove to conceal this change, especially in the presence of others, was evident ; but equally apparent was the fact that she did not succeed in doing so ; that each one of their little circle perceived and wondered at it—each probably finding or fancying a different solution of the mystery.

That the effect on himself was also noticed he could not doubt.

It would have been impossible not to notice it ; for though his manner did not alter, his appearance did. He grew thin and pale ; his face when at rest wearing the same expression by which Cecil had been both struck and touched when she saw that face first so many months before. And to read the suffering thus legibly marked on it was hard to her—very hard. Never yet had her woman's pride permitted her to acknowledge in words, even in the deepest recesses of her own thoughts, that she loved this man who had never expressed love for her ; but she did admit to herself that she pitied him with that passion of pain and admiration blended together which is seldom excited save by a contemplation of undeserved suffering.

It is not to be supposed that Kathleen Tyrconnel, with her quick sympathy and keen observation, was long in divining the cloud that had risen between the two people whom she fully believed to be formed for each other. She had carefully refrained from so much as hinting to her brother the conjecture of the Abbé and herself concerning Cecil's fortune, knowing well that the very suspicion of such a thing would be a lion in the way of his seeking to win Cecil's heart. She had a hundred times felicitated herself on the opportune illness which brought them again together, and rejoiced with exceeding great joy as day by day she beheld the interest with which they had been mutually inspired from their first meeting deepening into a life-long attachment. And to see all her expectations suddenly fade away was the sharpest disappointment and pain she had ever known.

She did not speak to either of them on the subject, a natural delicacy restraining her from manifesting consciousness so far as Cecil was concerned ; while an instinctive comprehension that it would be like touching a bare nerve of his heart to question her brother prevented her saying a word to him. Into the ear of her good friend the Abbé, however, she poured out freely her apprehensions and laments.

"There is certainly something the matter between them," she said, interlacing her fingers, and looking wistfully into the kind eyes bent upon her. "What can it be? Do you think she can have refused him?"

"I doubt if it is that," the Abbé answered. "Something is the matter—yes. But do not be in too great haste to despond. It may be merely some little misunderstanding—"

He paused and smiled.

"A lover's quarrel, you mean?"

"Well, yes. Such an occurrence would not be unprecedented."

She shook her head decidedly. "Neither of them is the sort of person for that," she said. "You know Gerald—that he is not ; nor, I assure you, is Miss Lorimer. It is so strange!" she went on sadly. "I cannot imagine the meaning of it, for even if, as I suspected at first, he has offered himself and been rejected, that surely would not affect *her* so much. From little things I have heard Miss Marriott say, she must be too much accustomed to admiration to take the disappointment of her rejected lovers much to heart. And she does take this to heart."

"For that reason I think we may hope that the

estrangement is only temporary," said the Abbé. "Is her manner to yourself changed at all?"

"No; she is as cordial to me as ever, only I see less of her. She always has some excuse now for making her visits very short, and she never comes alone. She and Miss Marriott were here half an hour ago, but they stayed only a few minutes, said they were engaged to dine with some friends of theirs who have lately arrived in Rome, and could not see us again this evening."

"That was a reasonable excuse."

"Yes, but only an excuse. Oh," she resumed after a momentary pause, "it breaks my heart to look at Gerald—to see how he is suffering! And I was so certain that a brighter life was opening for him. It was not that I thought so much of Miss Lorimer's money—I am sure she is very wealthy, though she never told me so. I thought of it a little, I must confess; for money would make such a difference in his life. But it was herself. She has such a fine nature—so like Gerald's own! And he loves her passionately! I can see that. It breaks my heart!"

The Abbé's own heart was very sad for her as he tried to say some words of encouragement and consolation, at which she shook her head hopelessly.

"I am so afraid," she said, "that he will go away and lose the opportunity of ever making up the difficulty, whatever it may be! Every day I expect him to say that he is going."

Her fears were prophetic; for almost as she spoke he came into the room, and, after greeting the priest with his usual cheerfulness and warmth, and talking for a few minutes on indifferent topics, he turned to her and said:

"I have had letters from Ireland—don't be alarmed!"—she had started nervously—"there is nothing unusual in them. But my presence is needed there, as you may suppose. And since you are now well again I must go—sorry as I am to leave you."

He spoke very tenderly, then resumed conversation with the Abbé, in order, as she knew, to give her time to recover from the effect of his announcement.

"You must go?" she said, when a few minutes later they were alone, the Abbé having soon taken leave.

"Yes," he answered, with a sigh, "I must go. Maloney writes me that there has been some tampering with the people—with that black sheep Pat Riley in particular. It is very important for me to be there on this account, and it is better on every account that I should go," he added, in a significant tone.

He was standing opposite Kathleen, and she looked up at him with such a questioning, apprehensive glance that he smiled, though sadly.

"What is it, Gerald?" she asked wistfully. "Something is the matter—I have seen that. What is it?"

"Nothing that words can mend," was the reply. "It is only that I have come back from dreamland to reality."

"But she loves you," said the girl, in a low, eager tone. "She loves you, Gerald—I am sure of it."

He shook his head. "No; the interest she has manifested toward me is not for myself, but for the work I am trying to do. How do I know this? From her own lips. She offered me money—any amount of money"—a faint smile, that had both humor and a dash of bitterness in it, moving his lips for an instant as he

spoke. "She is very wealthy, it seems, though I did not know it."

"I have suspected it," said Kathleen.

"I wish you had told me—warned me," he answered. "But, after all, it would have been the same if you had."

"Did she—have you"—began the girl, but broke down, and only concluded the question by a glance.

"Been rejected? No. Fortunately I never offered myself."

"But you love her?"

"Yes, God help me, I love her. But I shall never ask her to marry me."

"O Gerald, I am sure she loves you!" cried Kathleen, with passionate earnestness. "Don't let pride stand between you and happiness. Don't throw away—"

He motioned with his hand to her to stop. "You do not know what you are saying. You are entirely mistaken, as I told you before. It was not love for me that you observed in her—no!—or she would not have changed as she has. It was sympathy with my work. She might, perhaps, have married me in order to aid me in this work, had I asked her in time; for if I had spoken before I knew of her wealth she might have believed that it was herself I loved. *Now*, having waited apparently until I learned that she is rich, she could not but suspect my motives to be mercenary."

"How can you think such things of her!" the girl exclaimed, almost indignantly. "She is incapable of such suspicion! She is so generous, so noble—"

"Yes, she is generous and noble," he said, in a tone that sounded almost cold, so great was his effort to repress his emotion. "Do you suppose I do not know

that? But it is the generous and the noble who most scorn the mercenary and the mean—as she would take me to be if I now professed love for her. And so I should be, in a sense, since, as you know, I could not marry a woman without fortune, poor as I am myself; and therefore were I to marry her it would be because of, if not for, her fortune."

Kathleen looked at him in despair, it was so plain to her that he was wantonly, as it were, passing by the happiness that might be his; and so intolerable to feel that she had no power to prevent his doing so.

"Gerald, dear Gerald!" she said at last, "if you have no mercy on yourself, think of *her*. You have given her every reason to believe that your heart is hers. Are you going away without a word? I do not see how you can fail to perceive that it would be dishonorable in you to do so."

Tyrconnel's heart gave a great bound, his eye lightened, and he flushed. Ah, if he could but believe this! If he could but believe that honor demanded the sacrifice of his pride—of what he considered self-respect—he would make the sacrifice, and, perhaps, gain happiness. But he could not believe it, and the glow vanished as quickly as it had come.

"No," he said. "I love Cecil Lorimer with the one, exclusive passion of my life. But I am poor and she is very rich. I shall never ask her to be my wife."

CHAPTER XXV.

"I DID LOVE YOU."

IT chanced that Cecil on returning home from the hasty visit to Kathleen which the latter mentioned to the Abbé, found a large basket of flowers that had arrived for her during her absence. Partly a feeling that she had been neglecting Kathleen lately—visiting the sin of the brother, or her own folly, on the sister's head—and partly a remembrance of the wistful look on Kathleen's face as the girl said, "I see so little of you now!" inspired her instantly with the idea of taking these flowers to Miss Tyrconnel. Therefore on their way to the dinner to which they were going she stopped the carriage as they were passing Mrs. Tyrconnel's apartment, and, after a word of explanation to her companions, alighted and went in for a moment to present the fragrant offering.

With the habit of familiarity acquired while Kathleen was ill, she did not cause her presence to be announced by a servant, but, passing through the antechamber alone, lifted the *portière* and entered the *salon* during the moment of silence in which Tyrconnel was wrestling with the temptation excited by Kathleen's words.

His head was bent, his eyes fastened on the fire; and Kathleen was watching him with eager, strained gaze, her whole attention thus absorbed; so that neither of them heard the faint rustle of drapery, and Miss Lori-

mer had advanced half-way across the large room when, his eyes still fixed on the leaping flames, he spoke.

A world of emotion surged through her heart as his words cut clearly upon her ear—"No, I love Cecil Lorimer with the one, exclusive passion of my life. But I am poor and she is very rich. I shall never ask her to be my wife."

There was another silence of scarcely an instant's duration; but how much of thought, joy, pain can be crowded into the briefest measure of time in moments of strong feeling! Cecil's first consciousness was a sense of exultant happiness. He loved her! And swift as a flash her heart responded with the unuttered but passionate cry, "And I love you!" Then came the recoil. An icy hand seemed to seize her heart and still its wild throbbing, restoring as by magic her presence of mind and composure. She saw that neither the brother nor sister was aware of her presence, and, hoping to leave the room unperceived, turned to go—or rather she was about to turn; for so entirely were her thoughts now awake to the exigence of the moment, that she lifted carefully the folds of her rustling silk drapery before moving.

There was a slight sound caused by the motion of her hand, however, and it attracted their notice. Both glanced up, and there before them stood Cecil, looking more beautiful than they had ever seen her before; for she was in a toilet the richness of which adorned her beauty as the setting of a diamond enhances its brilliance. The friends to whom she was going being aware of her wealth, she was reluctant to appear singular in their eyes by dressing differently from what had been her custom when they saw her last; and this had

induced her to yield to the persuasions of her maid with regard to her toilet for the evening. And so she wore a rich gown of white silk and priceless lace, with gems glittering about her slender throat and on her arms, from which a light wrap had partly fallen.

As Tyrconnel's eye rested on her he thought in the first instant of his gaze that such a radiant presence must be a vision of his own imagination. But this fancy was dispelled when, becoming conscious that retreat was impossible, she moved quickly to Kathleen's side, and laid on her lap the roses which she had been carrying.

"I called just a moment," she said, in almost her ordinary voice, "to bring you these. I found them on my return home, and their perfume reminded me of you. Good-by again. Good-evening, Mr. Tyrconnel."

She bowed slightly, and was moving away when Tyrconnel stepped forward and stood beside her.

"Did you hear my last words?" he asked, in a very quiet tone—a tone so quiet that involuntarily she turned to reply; and as she encountered the look with which he was regarding her a vivid color leaped to her cheek and her heart beat suffocatingly. But she controlled herself, and answered in a voice very nearly as steady as his own:

"I heard them, yes; but it shall be as though I had not. It was my fault—though by accident—that I 'stumbled on your counsel.' I have to apologize for entering so unceremoniously. I will not do so again."

"Cecil!" he cried.

It was a passionate cry that compelled her eyes, which she had already averted, to return to the gaze that he was bending on her; and during a passing instant they

stood face to face, Kathleen meanwhile regarding them with a breathless, indescribable expression of mingled hope and fear. For the first time Tyrconnel permitted his voice and his eyes to speak the language of his heart; and there was one—just one—flash of response in the glance that met his own, before Cecil turned coldly away, refusing to see his extended hand.

But Kathleen started up, sprang to her side, and seizing her hand placed it in that of her lover, exclaiming:

"Gerald! Cecil! do not let pride stand between you! You love each other! What is money or the want of it to this love?"

"Nothing," answered Cecil, looking round at the pleading countenance of the speaker. "To me absolutely nothing. If he had held out his hand when I entered this room I would have given him my own without a falter of doubt or hesitation. But while every pulse of my heart was beating for him—and he must have felt and known it, as I felt and knew that his was beating for me—he was coldly weighing both these hearts in the scale against my fortune and his pride. And his pride outweighed them. And he thinks that he is not mercenary! In my eyes the veriest fortune-hunter could not be more so!"

"You are right," said Tyrconnel, in a low tone. "I have acted unworthily in that I have allowed a thought of—of anything to come between us. In my inmost soul I have felt this. But—"

"But you lacked the courage to incur an unjust judgment of the world—"

"No!" he interrupted, speaking quickly, almost violently. "It was not the world I feared, or even remem-

bered the existence of. It was of yourself that I was thinking—it was that *you* might misinterpret my motives."

"*I!*" she exclaimed, suddenly facing round on him again, her eyes blazing with indignant scorn. "And you knew me so little as that! You thought I would suspect you of wishing to marry my fortune, not myself?"

"Yes," he answered, a dark flush mounting to his brow. "I was blind and a coward; I see that now. But, O Cecil, if I had dared to believe that you returned my love—"

"I did love you!" she exclaimed, in a low but vehement tone. "I regarded you as the one man who ever realized my ideal of all that is loftiest in faith and honor. I admired, I *loved* you!" Her voice had sunk lower and lower, but rose again as she added, with intense disdain, "But that is past. I will tear out my heart sooner than waste its love longer on one who has proved himself so unworthy of it!"

He had been holding her hand, without the slightest resistance on her part, ever since Kathleen had placed it in his grasp; but now she hastily disengaged it, and, with a passionate gesture as of tearing out and casting away her heart, turned quickly and passed from the room.

There are occasions in life when the mind seems gifted with a double consciousness, it might almost be said a double individualism, by which it is enabled to exist in two separate worlds at the same time—a world of thought and one of merely mechanical action. It was so with Cecil Lorimer during the evening which followed. Almost blindly she made her way down the

stairs alone on leaving Tyrconnel, the latter not attempting to accompany her ; and on gaining the open air she put her hand to her throat with a sense of suffocation. Her heart was burning, her veins throbbing, her nerves tingling with such a passion of mingled and all but overpowering emotion as had never in her whole existence assailed her before. Indignation at and scorn of what seemed to her so cowardly and mercenary a spirit in Tyrconnel ; keen disappointment in seeing her ideal thus cast down from the pinnacle on which her imagination had placed him ; a bitter sense of pain as she felt that the opportunity she had so long been seeking—to use the talent of wealth given her—had escaped her grasp just when she thought she had at last secured it ; and, dominant over all, a half-reluctant and yet exultant sense of happiness in the certainty of Tyrconnel's love—all these conflicting sentiments were raging in her breast, while with sparkling eyes and gay words she was making herself the centre of attraction and admiration. So easy and apparently natural did she seem that even Mrs. Severn and Miss Marriott were deceived, and thought with pleasure that the slight cloud which had lately fallen over her was entirely dispelled.

Not so Craven, who was one of the guests present. He had been watching some minutes for the entrance of Mrs. Severn's party, and though it was not Miss Lorimer's stately figure that his eye sought first when the three names were announced, his glance was instantly caught and riveted by the bright bloom of her cheek and the unusual animation of her manner. "She has just seen Tyrconnel !" was his mental comment ; "and I do not envy him his sensations at the present

moment, judging by the expression of her eyes. I never saw her look like that before." An hour or two later this astute gentleman said to Miss Marriott :

"Your friend is a beautiful woman, and when it pleases her, a charming one. But I should not like to be her lover."

Cecil, meanwhile, was becoming conscious of that reaction after strong excitement which had been very familiar to her when as a child she was in the habit of falling into violent fits of anger, but which for some years past she had not permitted herself to incur. Nothing taxes the vital forces so severely as the unrestrained indulgence of passion ; and she felt this very keenly when, to her great relief, she at length found herself in the carriage on her return home. A sense of languor, apathy, profound depression both mental and physical, had succeeded her late unnatural excitement of mood. With the briefest of good-nights to her friends, she retired at once on reaching her apartment ; and so thoroughly wearied was she that her head had scarcely touched her pillow before she was in the deep, dreamless sleep of utter exhaustion.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"I MUST GO."

WHEN Cecil so violently withdrew her hand from his, and with bitter words of reproach left him, Tyrconnel flung himself into a chair, and, leaning his face down on a table beside him, remained silent and motionless for a long time—so long a time that Kathleen at length, going to his side, bent over him.

"O Gerald!" she exclaimed, "can you forgive me for being the cause of so much suffering to you? I who would endure any suffering myself to spare you! Oh, to think that I should have brought this wretchedness upon you!"

He lifted his head, and looked at her with surprise. "You!" he said. "My dear sister, what can you mean? How have you—"

"How have I caused your unhappiness?" she interrupted, in a miserable voice. "By bringing you into this association, which has proved so fatal to your peace. Ah, if only I had avoided instead of cultivating her friendship, as an instinct from the first warned me to do! I knew—Gerald, when you returned, and told us of that accident at sea, you mentioned her very slightly, but I fancied that you loved her even then."

"Yes, even then," he said—"from the first moment I saw her, I think. And that night when we were so near death, and she asked me to take her on deck if the

vessel was foundering, God forgive me if I almost hoped that might be the end, and thought that I could gladly go down into those icy depths with my arms clasped around her. No"—as a slight sob from Kathleen caught his ear—"I did not forget you, my poor darling, or my mother. I thought that my death might be the best solution of all the trouble, for you as well as for myself. But God willed otherwise. And to the difficulties that already beset me there was added the rending of my heart in parting from her—in feeling that under other circumstances I might perhaps have won her love; that if I could have permitted my heart to appeal to hers—"

He paused with a deep, long-drawn breath, and was silent for a moment; then suddenly becoming aware that Kathleen had sunk to her knees, and was looking at him with all her soul in her eyes, he rose hastily, lifted her from her lowly position, and half carrying her to her chair beside the fire, drew another close to it, sat down, and went on, in the tone of one pouring out the fulness of his heart:

"The pain and trouble I had to endure on reaching home—the sordid cares, the miserable scenes with my mother, even the seeing you, poor child, condemned to exist in an atmosphere of bitterness and contention that made your life sad—would have been yet worse than they were had not this other pain dwarfed their importance and dulled their edge. I often looked at you, and thanked God that sad as your life was it was exempt from the sharp suffering that was gnawing at my heart."

"You suffered so much *then!* And how much worse it is now!" said Kathleen, in a despairing tone. "Oh,

that I had never met her! Oh, that I had not fallen ill and brought you here to be made miserable!"

"I am not miserable now," he answered. "I am happy—inexpressibly happy. Can you not understand?" he continued, in reply to her look of astonishment. "She loves me!—you heard her say it. She loves me!"

"Yes," responded Kathleen, "I heard her say it. But she left you in anger—with cold and cruel words."

"No; they were words of just reproach. I do not resent them. I ought indeed to have known her better. I will never doubt her again."

"And you think there is hope of reconciliation?" cried the girl, eagerly.

"I think so—I think she will forgive me. But even if she does not, it will not be as it was before. She loves me—I know it now; and, egotist that I am, I cannot but rejoice in the knowledge."

"Thank God for that! And you will not go to-morrow, then?"

"I must go. There is no choice for me there. But I will see her before I go. A single glance will tell me whether she has forgiven my selfish pride. If she has not, I must wait patiently; if she has, I will write to her."

"But you *must* go?"

"I must go."

And he did go—though, unfortunately, he missed seeing Cecil before leaving, as he found no one but Miss Marriott at home when he called. That young lady did her best to induce him to remain and see Mrs. Severn and Miss Lorimer, but in vain. "I am expect-

ing them in every moment," she said; "and they will be so sorry if they miss seeing you."

"I am more than sorry that I cannot wait," he returned, with evident sincerity; "but I shall lose my train if I do, and it is very important to me to get off to-day. Railroad trains, like time and tide, you know, wait no man."

He went away, after saying everything of social acknowledgment in his own graceful and cordial manner; leaving a vivid picture in Miss Marriott's memory of his dark, clear-cut face, air of distinction, and the peculiarly attractive smile she had always remarked and admired so much.

But this smile vanished from his eyes the moment he found himself alone. He felt very sharply the disappointment of having failed to meet Cecil; and his spirits, which had been so unwontedly hopeful the evening before, were proportionately depressed now—the inevitable doubt of the lover returning upon him with full force and, as it were, double intensity. It was consequently with a very heavy heart and sombre countenance that he stepped into his train, and was whirled away from the bright presence which had shed over his life the only sunshine it had ever known.

Grace Marriott sighed and sighed again with a sort of impatient irritation after he left her. "It is unaccountable; I do not understand it!" she thought, as she had often thought before since first observing the estrangement between her friend and this man, about whom there was, to her, so wonderful a fascination. "He is making a great mistake in leaving without seeing Cecil. I am afraid they are both making a mistake which will be a lifelong regret to them."

Her face was very grave when, a few minutes later, she looked up at the announcement of another visitor, and there was an expression on it that rather startled that intruder, as he felt himself to be.

"I hope you will pardon me," he said—it was Craven—"for coming up when I was told you were not receiving. I met Mrs. Severn and Miss Lorimer half an hour ago, and, hearing that you were unwell this morning, I called merely to leave this book that we were speaking of the other day." He produced a volume from his pocket and laid it down on a table, while continuing, "But as I was entering I met Tyrconnel, who said he had just left you, and I hoped I too might be permitted the privilege of seeing you."

"Oh, certainly," she replied, but there was a slight shade of embarrassment in her manner. "I had a headache this morning, but it has almost left me now. Thank you so much for this book"—taking it up from where he had placed it. "I have been wanting to see it."

There was a moment of silence as she turned over the pages of the book; and he watched her face, until, becoming suddenly conscious that the situation was growing rather awkward, he recalled his wandering thoughts and remarked:

"So Tyrconnel is leaving Rome?"

"Yes. He must have been summoned home quite urgently," she answered.

"I am puzzled," said Craven. "It strikes me that he went away with his flag at half-mast, and I should like to know the reason why."

"What suggested such an idea to you?" asked Grace. "He seemed to me to be looking very well this morning, and quite in his usual spirits."

"So he seemed when speaking to me," replied Craven. "But I happened to catch a glimpse of his face before he was aware of my presence, and I never saw a more sad countenance. It changed at once to his ordinary expression when his eye caught mine."

"That was how he looked when we saw him first—sad and depressed," said Grace. "No doubt he is feeling now as he felt then—a great dread of returning to Ireland, and all the troubles he must encounter the moment he gets there."

"Do you think that is the only cause of his depression?" Craven inquired, dryly.

She hesitated, then said, reluctantly: "I think he is very much in love with Cecil."

"Of that there can be no question," responded her companion. "And, if it be permissible to say such a thing of a lady, I think she is in love with him. Why, therefore, so abrupt a departure on his part, and such an effort on her side to appear in uncommonly good spirits?"

Grace shook her head. "I never in my life knew two people who seemed to me to have less nonsense about them than Cecil and Mr. Tyrconnel," she said; "and yet I cannot but suspect that one or both of them must have acted very foolishly, or they would not be parting in this way. I have thought ever since we first met Mr. Tyrconnel that they were born for each other."

"As to that I don't know," said Craven. "But I have thought ever since I heard of him and his encumbered estate that here was a use to which Miss Lorimer might apply her superfluous thousands with advantage. And after seeing the man himself I am still more of that opinion."

"I am sure his mother and sister would agree with you if they knew of her thousands, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, millions. I suppose you are aware that she has five or six millions?"

"Ah?—so much as that?" said Craven. "No, I did not know the amount of her fortune. It was by chance that I came to hear at all of her being an heiress."

"It is one of her peculiarities," remarked Grace, "that she does not like her wealth known or talked about. She made my brother and myself promise that we would not mention it to any one. She has a horror of being annoyed by fortune-hunters."

"Perhaps Tyrconnel does not know of her wealth, and, feeling that he cannot afford to marry, has taken himself out of the way of temptation," observed Craven, smiling at the recollection of De Vérac's admirable prudence under similar circumstances.

"It is much more probable that he does know of it, and for this reason has taken himself out of the way of temptation," exclaimed Miss Marriott, with hasty warmth.

"I meant no imputation on his disinterestedness, I assure you," said her companion, with a laugh. "But do you really think it would be commendable in him to refrain from offering himself to Miss Lorimer, when he is so obviously in love with her, because she happens to be rich?"

"Certainly not. But I think it might be characteristic in him to hesitate—to dislike even the appearance of being mercenary in his motives. I can very well understand that a man of his stamp might feel in this way."

"Yes. He is typically Irish in his nature—and, in its best sense, that means generous and uncalculating.

If he did not have a very clear brain he might be as Quixotic as Miss Lorimer herself. But he is practical, though a little of a dreamer, I judge. I like him very much," he added, in a tone of unusual warmth. "In fact, it is a long time since I have met a man who pleased me in every respect so much."

Grace looked up with a smile from her occupation of idly tossing over the pages of the book that now lay open on her lap, and said: "*I* like him so much that I have wished all along that Cecil would marry him. But I am afraid there is no hope of it now."

"Impossible to conjecture," said Craven. "At present there is a hitch somewhere or somehow, but time may straighten that. One view of the matter which has occurred to me is that Miss Lorimer may have been avoiding his proposal, until, becoming discouraged, and taking it for granted that she wished to spare him the pain of rejection, he has withdrawn without speaking."

"I scarcely think that probable," said Grace, thoughtfully. "They have been a great deal together since Kathleen's recovery. He surely had opportunity to speak if he wished to do so."

"I thought I observed that she had been avoiding him for some days past," replied Craven. "You must have noticed that?"

"I have noticed a great constraint between them, but what the meaning of it is I cannot conceive."

"Sometimes women do act in this way," Craven went on, pursuing his own train of thought. "I am not alluding to the intentional evasions and artifices practised by coquettes for the gratification of their vanity. I mean"—he spoke gravely and deliberately—

"that it is a mistaken kindness to refuse to let a man hear his fate in words, even if it is to be adverse to his hopes. You must be aware that for some time past I have wished to ask mine. I have not very much to offer which you may think worth your acceptance—a moderate fortune with tastes and habits of life that would, I believe, suit your own, and a very sincere admiration, a very earnest love. Is it worth while to offer you these things?"

She hesitated to speak, but the expression of her countenance so plainly answered the question in the negative, that Craven's face lost a shade of color.

"I see that there is no hope for me," he said. "I feared—I might have known—that it would be so. Forgive me for having pained you uselessly. Good-by."

At the last word he rose, and, glancing toward him, Grace was so struck by the sudden change in his appearance that she exclaimed, impulsively:

"Do you really care so much? Oh, I am sorry! I wish—"

A vivid blush dyed her cheek and brow, and a look of doubt, which Craven was quick to detect, came into her eyes.

"You wish you could love me?" he suggested. "Are you sure that you could not—if you tried?"

"I am sure that if I tried and succeeded I should be departing from my ideal of what would make me happy, of what I have always meant my life to be," she replied. "My dream has always been to devote myself to art."

He approached the couch on which she was sitting, and placed himself beside her as he said gently:

"Dreams are well enough in their way, but they are very unsubstantial, very unsatisfying after a time. I do not say that there are not people in the world who may be contented with them, but I don't think you, any more than myself, are of the number."

"How can you tell what would content me?" she asked, in a low tone.

"You may not be aware of it, but I am a very close observer of character," he replied; "and am not often mistaken in my judgment, I have found. I have done more than observe your character—I have studied it; and I am convinced that, while you love art sincerely, the studio of a painter and the *salons* of society would not very long continue to satisfy all the requirements of your nature. After early youth, the heart as well as the head asks something of life. And sometimes a realization of this truth comes very suddenly, perhaps too late. It had but just begun to dawn on my mind when I came to Rome, and unexpectedly met my fate."

"And I," she said, with a half laugh, "came to study art—"

"And," he interposed, "to meet yours—may I hope?"

She shook her head. "I dare not give you any such assurance as that."

"But you do not forbid me to hope?" he said, his face clearing visibly. "So here I rest my case. Take a week, a month, even, if you insist, a year, to decide whether you will not share with me the life you have dreamed of, instead of pursuing it alone."

CHAPTER XXVII.

"WHAT SHALL MY MESSAGE BE?"

IT was the day following the one on which Tyrconnel left that Cecil and Kathleen met by accident in one of the churches to which they were both much in the habit of going.

It often happens that small embarrassments are almost as hard to deal with as more serious ones. Cecil had found this to be the case when the question of how she was to meet Miss Tyrconnel, or whether she should make any effort to meet her at all, presented itself to her mind. It was not until after she had heard of Tyrconnel's departure that it did present itself; but, remembering then the white heat of passion into which she had suffered herself to fall in Kathleen's presence, she was undecided what to do.

"How little one ever knows one's self and one's own weakness!" she thought, in deep humility. "How little could I have conceived the possibility of losing self-control as I did! I deserve all that Jack and Nelly ever thought of me. No wonder they are in terror of my committing some great imprudence—giving away half my fortune, or bartering the whole of it for a coronet, as they fear I may sometime do. I despise myself! It shall be a lesson to me. But—how can I extricate myself now from this dreadfully awkward position?"

She was passing slowly along the nave on her way

out of the church as these thoughts filled her mind; and, as if in reply to the question she had asked herself, her gaze was magnetically attracted. Looking up, she encountered the gentle regard of Kathleen Tyrconnel's soft dark eyes.

What was there in Kathleen's glance, what in her own, that immediately dissolved the sense of constraint which, so long as they did not meet, each felt toward the other? Probably neither could have defined in words how it was that soul spoke to soul so plainly; but their hands were extended as by a single impulse almost as their eyes met, and if there was the faintest shadow of restraint now it was not on Kathleen's side.

"I am so glad to have met you!" she said, when they were without the door of the church. "You will have the charity to come and stay with me to-day, will you not? Mamma's cold is still so bad that she can only lie on her sofa with a book; and," she added, with a pathetic tone of entreaty in her voice, "I am feeling so lonely!"

"I would come," answered Cecil, "but I am very anxious to get my mail this morning. I was disappointed yesterday in hearing from home, and I am hoping for letters to-day."

"Ah? Then I cannot expect it," said Kathleen; who, however, looked so very much disappointed that Cecil paused and said:

"I cannot stay with you long, but if you will give me some breakfast—"

"You have not breakfasted!" cried Kathleen, hastily. "Come at once, then."

And entering the carriage, which was now waiting, they drove to Mrs. Tyrconnel's apartment. Not a word

was said of the subject which engrossed the thoughts of both until, breakfast over, they went into the *salon.* Then, as Cecil's eyes sought and involuntarily rested upon the spot where Tyrconnel stood the last time she had entered that room, Kathleen's arm stole around her, and her gentle voice said :

"You have forgiven him, Cecil?"

"It is I who need forgiveness, I think," Cecil replied, a flush of bright color dyeing her statuesque face. "I am very conscious now how unreasonable I was."

"Then I may show you this," said Kathleen, putting an envelope into her hand.

As she walked to the window to examine it, she saw that it was addressed by Tyrconnel—but to his sister, not herself ; and on taking out the enclosure it proved to be only a few words written on the back of a card, which he had sent from the station when about to start :

"I did not see her. Find out if I may write, and telegraph me one word—'Yes' or 'No.' G."

She stood gazing at the clear, decided characters for several minutes before returning to Kathleen, who had sunk into a deep chair, and now lifted her eyes with questioning glance.

"You understand?" she said, as Cecil sat down near her in silence. "What shall my message be? 'Yes' or 'No'?"

"'Yes,'" answered Cecil, looking bravely into those questioning eyes.

Several hours later she was sitting in her own room, reading the letters she had spoken of, among which she found one from Madame de Vérac urging her to come to Paris for the spring. It was the second time that

this invitation had been pressed upon her, the Vicomtesse having written before, announcing the marriage of her nephew, and reminding her young relative of the latter's promise to return to her. Cecil had then waived the question with a general promise that later in the season she would try to tear herself away from Rome; but Madame de Vérac's entreaties that she would come soon being now very earnest, she was considering what excuses she could make for postponing her visit longer, and at last decided that, as there really was no reason why she should not go at once, she would write the next day and set a definite time for her journey. She felt less hesitation at leaving her two companions than she would otherwise have done from the fact that, as their apartment had been engaged for six months, the curtailment of her own stay would not in the least degree render necessary their leaving Rome sooner than they had all along intended. And having settled this point with them her mind was at ease. She disliked leaving Kathleen Tyrconnel; but already she had conceived the idea of endeavoring to prevail on Mrs. Tyrconnel to try the air of Paris for her daughter's health as the spring advanced, feeling sure that Kathleen would second her wishes and arguments.

These details of her future movements being thus decided upon, her spirits rose from the depression under which she had been laboring ever since her misunderstanding with Tyrconnel; and she looked so radiantly lovely as she entered the *salon* before dinner that Craven, who chanced to be one of the guests that day, fixed on her a glance in which admiration and a sort of disapproval were equally perceptible—perceptible at least to Grace Marriott. It was an unusual blending of expres-

sion, she thought, and wondered what mingling of sentiment it reflected. "It seems impossible," she said to herself, "that he could pass her by to admire me. Can he have been her lover in Paris?"

Though the farthest in the world from what could be called a jealous nature, and though more than ready always to acknowledge excellence in another—especially in Cecil, for whom she entertained not only the greatest admiration, but also the warmest friendship—the conjecture thus suggested to Grace was not agreeable. She had been considering Craven's parting adjuration of the day before, and there was beginning to dawn on her mind—or it might be her heart—a thought that, after all, Art would be rather a cold atmosphere to dwell in permanently—alone. She was, moreover, both touched and flattered by the regard of such a man, and had gone so far as to think of a favorable reply to his suit. And now the idea that it might perhaps be Cecil's rejected admirer to whom she was on the point of giving her heart caused a strong revulsion of feeling, with a sense of something like pain which astonished her.

During dinner she found herself regarding her friend and her lover with very curious observation, Craven meanwhile being intent on the problem of what seemed to him the strange inconsistencies of Cecil's conduct; and the explanation which finally presented itself to him quite startled Grace when he suddenly said, as he leant over the back of her chair after they returned to the *salon*:

"I am beginning to suspect that instead of the fine nature with which my imagination had invested Miss Lorimer she is very commonplace in her faults of character."

His tone was so cynical that Grace, much surprised, glanced first at his face and then toward Cecil, who, brilliant alike in toilet and manner, was devoting herself to the entertainment of her guests with an unaffected animation and pleasure which Craven had never seen her exhibit before, even in Paris.

"But why," asked Miss Marriott, wonderingly—"why should you suspect such a thing?"

"It seems to me," he said, speaking with great deliberation, "that she must be either a heartless flirt or a consummately artful coquette."

"What words as applied to Cecil!" exclaimed his hearer, as soon as astonishment permitted her to reply. "I really don't know whether to be indignant or amused—if you are in earnest. But I think you surely must be jesting."

"I am in earnest."

"Then I cannot flatter you on your knowledge of character," she remarked, a little coldly.

"Do not be offended," he said, "but hear my reasons for this opinion. If I ever in my life saw tacit encouragement of a man's suit, it was in Miss Lorimer's manner to Tyrconnel. Yet you perceive how the affair has ended. It seems plain that he has been rejected—"

"I am not sure of that," interrupted Grace.

"I think you would not entertain much doubt on the subject if you had seen his face as I did yesterday morning. And she is in the highest spirits at the idea of returning to Paris and the admiration awaiting her there. I had fancied until this evening that her manner was a little forced. But there is no mistaking the genuineness of that"—as Cecil's low but unrestrained laughter came to their ears.

Grace made no immediate reply. She was almost as much puzzled by the seeming inconsistencies he pointed out as was Craven himself, who presently resumed :

"It is not alone her attitude toward Tyrconnel that has suggested my change of opinion about her. Not that taken alone, I mean, but in connection with what went before it. Did she ever tell you that the Comte de Vérac was very much in love with her ?"

"No," replied Grace, with a certain severity of tone which amused him, "she never did. On the contrary, she told me that negotiations were already in progress when she arrived in Paris for the marriage which has now taken place ; and that she liked the young Count exceedingly, not only because he was charming in himself, but also because she felt perfectly safe from annoyance either from or about him."

Craven shrugged his shoulders. "She was not quite candid," he remarked. "She escaped the annoyance of a proposal of marriage only by carefully concealing the fact that she is an heiress. De Vérac was openly, distractingly in love with her."

"You speak as if she were to blame for it," said Grace. "I am not surprised at her reticence. But I had inferred something of the kind from her leaving France so suddenly—and," she added, "because most men who come in contact with her also fall in love with her."

"I never did, I assure you," he said, with a smile. "I have never been anything in sentiment any more than in fact but her friend."

Grace looked up with an answering smile. "I wonder," she said, "that since you seem to resent Mr. Tyrconnel's supposed wrongs so much, you do not exer-

cise the privileges of a friend, and call Cecil to account about it."

"That I could not venture," he replied. "She is not a person with whom any one, even her nearest friends, can take a liberty."

But he remembered that he had taken the liberty of speaking to her very freely about De Vérac, and the instinct which warned him to leave Tyrconnel's name unmentioned now suddenly caused him to say to himself :

"This is a different affair. After all, she may intend to marry him."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"I WILL GO."

"I SHALL be sorry for the Vicomtesse if she ever discovers that she entertained an heiress unawares, without using the occasion to De Vérac's advantage," said Craven to Miss Lorimer one day, shortly after she had announced her intention of returning to Paris.

"She will never discover it if her enlightenment on the subject rests with me," said Cecil, smiling, in reply to his remark. "But I think she would prefer this alliance which she has succeeded in bringing about even to an American fortune."

"Abstractly she might have thought she would," answered Craven—who indeed was well aware that this had been the case—"but brought face to face with the glittering possibilities of what your fortune would have been to her nephew, I don't doubt that her preference would have been for the substantial good."

Cecil laughed. "Then it is well," she said, "that my good genius inspired me with the idea of maintaining silence on this important point; as I should have been sorry to excite hopes and then disappoint them."

"Yet," began Craven—and then paused.

"Yet, you would say, I thought at one time of permitting such hopes to be realized," she observed, a wave of color sweeping over her face. "Yes, I was

tempted to take into my hands the rebuilding of the fallen fortunes of a great house, and the lifting up from enforced inactivity to a broad and high pathway of usefulness what seemed to me the wasted capabilities of a fine nature. As to the Comte de Vérac himself, he came into my dream only as an accessory, I assure you. There was never in my mind the faintest shadow of any sentiment other than cordial liking and admiration connected with the man personally."

"I remember," said Craven, "your resenting my suggestion of romance in the matter."

"And I have to thank you for correcting a mistake I was making as to his character," she went on frankly. "Something you said made me understand that I was crediting him with higher abilities and altogether a finer nature than he really possesses. Since then I have learned to estimate the difference between mere personal aspiration, even if it is in itself admirable, and that loftier principle which forgets self entirely in the endeavor to benefit others."

A light came into her eyes as she spoke, and Craven, who perfectly comprehended the contrast that was in her mind, said with a smile :

"I am afraid that you expect too much, in the way of lofty principle and self-sacrifice, not to be more often disappointed than satisfied with human nature in general."

"I am afraid I am often very absurd in my expectations," she answered, with a humility that astonished him, so foreign was it to anything he had observed in her before.

"No," he said ; "there are characters capable of that complete devotion to impersonal ends ; and, as

your own character happens to be one of these, you are inclined to go on the common but fallacious rule of judging others by yourself. This will not do. De Vérac, for instance, could not stand such a test, but would fall short of the high standard of excellence you took for granted in him. That is all I meant."

"I am too hasty in my judgments very frequently—I am aware of that," she admitted; "and perhaps too decided in my manner of expressing them. But when a thing is perfectly clear to one's own eyes it is not easy to understand how others fail to see it in the same light."

"Looking at a thing from different points of view makes a great difference in its appearance to the gazer," he remarked.

"Yes," she said. "Still, there are some things—"

She stopped and was silent for a moment; then, regarding him with her usual directness of glance, went on:

"We have always been very frank in speaking to each other, Mr. Craven, and I want to tell you that you have my best wishes for your success—need I say in what or with whom?"

"You are very kind," he answered, smiling. "I have never doubted that your penetration would discover what I have not endeavored to conceal. But my success is not assured, I regret to say."

"I think that it will be," she said. "Grace has told me nothing, but the penetration of which you speak enables me to perceive, or to believe that I perceive what she does not perhaps herself suspect. And I am glad. I can say no more."

There was not, indeed, opportunity for saying more,

since at this moment Miss Marriott and Mrs. Severn, who had been driving, entered the room. But the next morning, finding herself alone with the former, Cecil ventured to speak on the same subject to her.

"I like Mr. Craven so very much, dear Grace," she said, "that I must run the risk of saying that I hope you will marry him."

Grace looked very thoughtful. "I am afraid it would be a great risk on both sides," she said. "The possibility of marrying never entered into my dreams of the future, and he never before thought of it—he says."

"You mean that a man always says that," Cecil observed, with a slight laugh. "But in this case I think you may believe the assertion. I know his friends never considered him 'a marrying man.'"

At this moment a servant entered the room and presented a note to Miss Lorimer with the message :

"From Miss Tyrconnel."

Cecil's color rose as she received it, and her heart beat quickly ; for she thought it was the letter from Tyrconnel which Kathleen had told her to expect either on this day or the next. But on opening the envelope she found only a telegram. With fingers that trembled more from excitement than any presentiment of evil, she unfolded the paper. And this was what she read :

"Gerald shot. Wound dangerous. Come at once.

"JOHN O'CONOR."

Under the message, in Kathleen's writing, were the words, "I am going by the morning train. Good by."

Grace Marriott, who had been busying herself with her work without glancing toward her friend, suddenly

felt the dead silence, which followed the slight rustle of the paper in Cecil's hand, to be oppressive, and looked up.

"Good heavens!" she exclaimed. "What is the matter, Cecil?"

The latter lifted her eyes with an expression in them that haunted Grace Marriott's memory for many a day afterward, and extended the telegram. Her face was perfectly bloodless; but she rose, and by a great effort of self-command turned quietly to the servant, who was waiting, and bade him order the carriage at once. "Let there be no delay. I shall be ready for it in a few minutes," she said, as he was leaving the room. Then, addressing Grace, who, shocked beyond the power of expression, sat silently regarding the telegram, she continued: "Mrs. Tyrconnel is quite unable to travel, I am sure. I shall go with Kathleen. Will you see that Maria joins me at the station—or, if she does not get there in time, follows on the next train, Grace?"

"I will see that she is in time," replied Grace. "But let me assist you now, Cecil."

"There is not much to do," said Cecil, as she led the way to her chamber. "Give my love to Mrs. Severn, and tell her I am sorry not to have seen her before I left. I hope we shall meet again."

She said no more until—the few preparations necessary for her unexpected journey completed—she was about to enter the carriage, when, putting her arms around Grace and kissing her, she whispered in her ear, "Do not be unkind to Mr. Craven, or"—there was a little quiver of voice here—"you may bitterly repent it."

Except that the two faces were in color more like alabaster images than living countenances, Kathleen and Cecil met almost as usual.

"How is your mother?" were Cecil's first words.

"Much too ill to travel," was the reply; "but she is determined to go, though the doctor says she ought not to think of it."

"Let me see her, please."

Miss Tyrconnel hesitated.

"I want to tell her that I am going. If I am with you she may consent to wait until she is better able to take the journey."

"You!—you will go?" cried Kathleen, a quickening light suddenly coming to the dark eyes that the moment before had looked almost dull with despair. "O Cecil, God bless you!"

Cecil grasped her hand with almost painful force. "Hush!" she said. "We must not break down, either of us."

CHAPTER XXIX.

"SPEAK TO HIM."

THE long hours of that weary day passed very slowly to Cecil. She was so unaccustomed to anything but the green and pleasant paths of life that the weight of apprehension and anxiety now oppressing her, together with that strange sense of unreality inseparable from sudden and unexpected change of any kind, affected her very painfully. Everything which had occurred since the moment when she opened the telegram that brought such disastrous news was to her memory vague and dream-like. Grace Marriott's shocked and sympathetic looks, Kathleen's pale countenance, the haggard, despairing face of Mrs. Tyrconnel, and the difficult scene with her (she having at first been resolute to set off at once for Ireland), the drive to the station and the stagnant hours that followed—all stood as a sort of background to the one torturing thought that Tyrconnel was perhaps dying—perhaps dead! Before leaving Rome she had suggested to Kathleen telegraphing to the priest from whom the message had come, to dispatch intelligence of Tyrconnel's condition to different points on their route; but Kathleen shook her head decidedly at the proposal.

"No, no!" she exclaimed. "If this is to be the end of all his efforts—and it is what I have ever feared and expected—I want a little time to *try* to resign

myself to God's will. I cannot part with hope yet. Suspense is terrible, but not so terrible as the certainty of despair."

And so in a suspense that was all but intolerable to Miss Lorimer the journey was made, and not until they reached Ireland was any further information received.

It was just as they were preparing to leave the boat that Cecil saw Kathleen start forward and seize the arm of a gentleman who had come on board and was looking about him, evidently in search of some one, exclaiming as she did so :

"Harry !"

"Kathleen !" was the response of the young man, his hand closing over hers with a strong clasp, while he went on in the same breath : "Gerald is badly hurt, but the doctors think he will pull through."

"Thank God !—thank God !" ejaculated Kathleen, in a broken voice. "But—O Harry, you are not—"

"Deceiving you ? Certainly not," he replied. "How could you imagine I would do such a cruel thing !"

"You do not look—hopeful."

"I do not look very cheerful, I suppose," he admitted ; "because there is still great cause for anxiety, and I have no wish to conceal this from you. Though the worst danger is over, the result is still doubtful, and must remain so for some days to come—until the crisis of the fever is passed. But I am hopeful, I assure you ; and, what is of much more importance, so are the surgeons. I trust you are not ill ? You look wretchedly."

"Oh, no ! I am well."

"Your presence will be the best thing possible for Gerald. He said last night that he was afraid you

were not able to travel, but that he knew you would attempt to come."

"He is conscious, then?" said Kathleen, falteringly.

"Oh, perfectly so! But he is not allowed to talk much. How is Mrs. Tyrconnel? I see she is not with you."

"No; she was too ill to leave her chamber when I came away. But she will be here soon. She could scarcely be prevailed on to wait a day or two before starting, and at last only consented to do so when a friend of mine kindly offered to accompany and take care of me. And that reminds me—I must introduce you."

Still holding his arm, she led him to Cecil, and presented him to her, saying:

"This is my old friend and neighbor, Harry Dalton, Cecil, whom I have often mentioned to you. Miss Lorimer, Harry."

"Mr. Dalton's name is very familiar to me," said Cecil, giving her hand cordially to the young man, of whom she had frequently heard, and whose frank, handsome face was very prepossessing.

"But what of our train?" exclaimed Kathleen suddenly. "For Heaven's sake do not let us lose it!"

"There is no danger of that," said Mr. Dalton. "You have time enough. I am sorry I cannot go back with you," he continued; "but I am obliged to remain to attend to some business. I need not say, Kathleen, you will find my mother at the castle, besides the surgeons and several other people."

The last sentence recurred to Cecil's memory when, half an hour afterward, they were again on their way, rapidly nearing the end of their journey; and for the

first time the thought came to her that she had placed herself in a somewhat awkward position in taking this journey, under the peculiar circumstances of the case. The world (of people whom she was about to encounter) *might* believe that it was purely the solicitude of a friend which had induced her to bear Miss Tyrconnel company ; it was not, however, very likely that this would be their view.

"But, after all, how little it matters what they think !" she said to herself. "If God does but spare his life how gladly will I meet any trifling embarrassment that I may be called upon to endure ! And if—"

Her thoughts paused there. She would not permit her mind to entertain the fear—which neither could she entirely banish from it—that his life might not be spared. And this fear made itself more and more felt as the period approached when doubt on the subject would be changed to certainty. Both she and Kathleen sat cold and faint and sick to the soul as they drew near the way-station at which they were to leave the train. They had started from Dublin a little past noon, and the sun was on the verge of the horizon when at length, perceiving that their speed was slackening, Kathleen glanced out of the window, and drew a quickened breath as she said :

"This is the station, and yonder is the carriage waiting. But I do not see Father John. I thought he would come to meet—ah, there he is !"

Cecil looked, and saw a tall man in a cassock, whose dignified bearing and snow-white hair gave him a very venerable appearance, advancing along the platform in their direction. The expression of his countenance, as she noticed at once, was not reassuring. He was look-

ing very grave until his eye fell on Kathleen, as she hurried toward him, when, smiling cheerfully, he took both her hands, and answered the question her quivering lips were vainly endeavoring to ask.

"There has been no change since Harry Dalton left," he said. "You met him in Dublin?"

"Yes," answered Kathleen. Then, in a voice which did not sound like her own, so strained and sharp was it, she said: "Tell me, Father, is there hope?"

"There is hope," he replied. "While there is life there is hope. And God is very merciful and all-powerful. But we must be resigned to His holy will, my child, whatever comes."

"I try," said the girl, in a low tone. "But, O Father—"

She clasped her hands, an expression of anguish convulsing her features; but, controlling herself almost immediately, turned and introduced the Father and Miss Lorimer, with the same explanation of the presence of the latter which she had given to Mr. Dalton.

After leaving the railway there were still some miles to go, and it was night when at last they approached the home so dear to Kathleen, and which held for Cecil so deep an interest. By the light of a full moon in a cloudless sky, the latter caught her first view of the old and imposing castle that owned Tyrconnel as its lord. Kathleen pointed it out while they were still some distance away; for it stood on a bold eminence, one side of which sloped gradually down into the fertile valley through which they were passing. Dimly outlined against the sky, the massive, irregular pile, with its great square tower rising majestically above many picturesque gables, looked like a stronghold of the

Middle Ages—as indeed it originally was—rather than a modern habitation ; and Cecil's emotions were strange when she found herself within its walls. She felt as if some spell had been laid on her, transforming her hitherto commonplace life into one of weird romance. Even her anxiety about Tyrconnel seemed half dream-like for a time, so unreal did everything around her appear.

An elderly lady, whom she had no difficulty in recognizing by her likeness to her son as Mrs. Dalton, met them as they entered the great hall with quite a cheerful air, and, after embracing Kathleen warmly and receiving her friend with the greatest courtesy and cordiality, said to the former :

" Don't be making yourself so miserable, my poor child ! I feel quite easy about our dear boy now that you are here. We received your telegram, and he has been very much troubled about you, fearing that the journey would be too much for your strength. How is she, Miss Lorimer ?" turning to Cecil. " Has she borne the fatigue pretty well ?"

" I don't think she has felt it at all," answered Cecil, " her anxiety has been so absorbing."

" She looks like a ghost," said Mrs. Dalton, candidly. " You must both be worn out after such a hurried journey. Come and take some tea at once, and then you must go to bed and get a good night's sleep."

" Let me see Gerald first !" cried Kathleen. " Dear Mrs. Dalton, I must see him—now !"

" Come and take your tea, my dear," said Mrs. Dalton, with good-humored peremptoriness. " Afterward we will talk about your seeing Gerald ; though I think it would be better not to venture it to-night. It

will not do to run the risk of rousing and exciting him."

"Oh, I would not disturb him!" said Kathleen. "Just to see him is all I ask. If you think there would be the slightest risk," she added, with touching submission, "I will wait. But I cannot sleep; I must be near him!"

The lady shook her head gravely. "You really must sleep, my dear, and eat, or you cannot keep up your strength, which you will need. I suppose you heard from Harry and Father John all about this dreadful affair, and that the danger now is not so much from the wound—which is doing very well—as from exhaustion?"

"Yes."

"If he is kept perfectly quiet, and his strength can be sustained until after the crisis of the fever, all will go well, the doctors say. But the least exertion or excitement would prove"—fatal was the word on her lips, but meeting the expression of Kathleen's eyes she changed it to—"dangerous. So you see you must be on your guard."

"You need not fear any imprudence on my part. I will not rouse or excite him," Kathleen said.

But when, presently, she stood beside his bed it seemed to her that it would be well if he were roused from a slumber that looked so death-like as that in which he lay. The impulse to call his name, to entreat him to speak to her, was almost irresistible. In the subdued light, that was carefully shaded away from the couch, she could distinguish only the dim outlines of a thin, wan face, and a form so motionless that her heart stood still in sudden fear when her eye fell on it. And it was not until she bent her ear close to his lips

that she could hear the faint sound of his breathing.

The days which followed were very miserable. Tyrconnel recognized her and smiled faintly, uttering a few words of welcome and of inquiry about his mother, when he saw her first ; but after that he scarcely spoke at all. It was evident that with each recurring paroxysm of fever his strength declined ; and not less evident to Kathleen that the physicians—of whom there were three in attendance—grew more and more apprehensive as the period of the crisis approached.

To Cecil the situation and her surroundings would have been intolerably embarrassing if she had not been too much concerned about Tyrconnel to give much thought to herself. Even so, the strain required to refrain from exhibiting more than just the moderate degree of interest in her friend's brother which the circumstances of the case seemed to demand, taxed her powers of self-control to the utmost. There were numerous guests in the castle in addition to Mrs. Dalton, Father John, and the medical men : friends of the wounded man, coming and going at all hours ; police, detectives ; tenants, both men and women, eager for tidings, and burning with indignation at the cowardly outrage which had been perpetrated. The whole atmosphere was pervaded by an air of excitement and suspense ; and Cecil found it very painful to be obliged to listen to, and sometimes join in, the discussions and speculations on the subject of the outrage, which went on continually.

So far the affair remained wrapped in profound mystery. Tyrconnel had been fired upon twice from ambush, while passing on horseback a clump of brush about half a mile from the castle—the second shot in-

flicting a very dangerous wound in the neck—and the assassin or assassins had escaped. That was all which was known with any certainty ; and every effort to trace the perpetrators of the crime had up to this time proved unsuccessful ; though the police, zealously supported by many voluntary assistants, were actively engaged in pursuit of them. No doubt, however, existed in the mind of anybody but that the deed had been committed by emissaries of those scourges of the land, secret societies.

It was on the evening of the seventh day after their arrival at the castle that Kathleen went to Cecil's room just as the latter was about to retire for the night.

"Cecil," she said, abruptly, "do not undress to-night. The crisis will occur soon. I have never dared to risk exciting him by telling him that you were here. But now the fever is rising, and when it leaves him he *must* be excited, the doctors say. There is danger that he will sink unless he can be roused. I want you to come and speak to him."

"Let me go now," said Cecil, in a breathless whisper.

"No, not now," answered Kathleen. "I will come for you if there is need—if the doctors approve. I have not asked them yet."

She was turning to leave the room, but Cecil caught her hand. "Kathleen, tell me," she said, "there is still hope ?"

"Scarcely hope, only a *possibility*. The surgeons say that he may rally if his attention can be roused and his interest excited suddenly. Something like a shock communicated to his mind, Dr. Ormond said. Pray—O Cecil, pray that it may be God's will to grant us his life !"

Cecil did not need this exhortation ; her whole soul had been going up in passionate supplication for his life ever since she had heard that it was imperilled ; and, casting herself on her knees now, she prayed as she had never prayed in her life before, goaded on, as it were, not by her love alone, but by that emotion which is as strong as love and as bitter as death—remorse.

Hours of torturing expectation passed as she waited for the summons that did not come. Perhaps it might not come at all, she thought. Tyrconnel might die without knowing how she had repented her hardness to him. "And if he dies," she said to herself, "what is there for me but a life-long remorse? If I had not been so hard, so cold, he would not have left Rome when he did. All would have been different—"

"Cecil!"

She started, and, looking up, saw Kathleen standing in the open door. The next moment the two were hurrying through the long corridors toward Tyrconnel's chamber. Several persons were leaving the apartment as they entered, but the three surgeons were standing around the bed, one of them holding a wine-glass. With a delicacy which Cecil remembered and appreciated afterward, though she did not notice it at the time, two of them at once withdrew, followed by the third as soon as he had given the glass in his hand to Kathleen, saying :

"Get him to take this, if you can, and at the first sign of rallying let me know."

As Cecil approached the bed she grew suddenly faint and a blackness like midnight came before her sight. For an instant she was unconscious ; but the darkness

passed then, and she found herself gazing down on a marble-pale face that, in the broad, almost glaring light which was streaming over it, looked to her like death.

"Gerald!" cried Kathleen, in a trembling voice; "Gerald, here is Cecil—Cecil Lorimer!"

He unclosed his eyes, and they rested with a dull stare on the speaker; but the lids sank again, almost immediately.

"Take his hand—speak to him—try to rouse him!" Kathleen exclaimed, in an agony of mingled hope and fear. "He is not asleep, but we cannot *hold* his attention. He is going off into coma, they say. Oh, speak to him—it is the last hope!"

"Gerald!" said Cecil, clasping his hand in both her own.

Again the heavy lids lifted, and again fell.

"Mr. Tyrconnel!" Cecil cried, this time bending her face close to his. "*Mr. Tyrconnel!*"

The utterance of this name—the only name she had ever called him—was like a spell in its effect. He looked up with life and intelligence in his glance, his eye kindling with a spark of its old light as it rested on her face.

"You!" he said, his thin, nerveless fingers making an effort to clasp hers.

"I—Cecil," she answered.

He looked at her steadily for an instant, then turned his gaze to his sister, who was close beside Cecil.

"Kathleen," he said, very feebly, "I see—her—face. Am—I—dreaming?"

"No, darling brother, you are not dreaming; she is here," answered the girl, in a choking voice. "And you—oh, thank God, you are better—you will live!"

"If it is—God's will," he said.

* * * * * * * *

"I knew it!" said Mrs. Bernard to her husband, when she received Cecil's letter announcing her engagement to Tyrconnel. "I knew that if Cecil went to Europe she would marry—and stay there!"

"I thought myself that it was most likely she would," was the reply. "And I don't think her doing so is to be regretted."

"I do!" said the lady, in a tone which had a suspicion of tears in it.

"From what Craven says—oh, by the way"—he interrupted himself with a laugh—"did I tell you that Craven is about to be married?"

"What!"

Mr. Bernard repeated what he had just said.

"Mr. Craven! I don't believe it!" said Mrs. Bernard, in a very positive tone.

"I have only his own word to depend upon for the truth of the matter," observed Mr. Bernard, with affected gravity. "But I was going to remark that, from what he says, Tyrconnel must be just the man to meet Cecil's rather exigent demands in the way of a husband. And she will have plenty of use for her money in the rehabilitation of an Irish estate. Depend upon it, the whole business will suit her admirably."

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And it does, as she gratefully acknowledges while using the fortune which so nearly kept the lives of Tyrconnel and herself apart, in "doing some work in the world" for the glory of God and the benefit of her neighbor.

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